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THE ANIME & MANGA MAGAZINE

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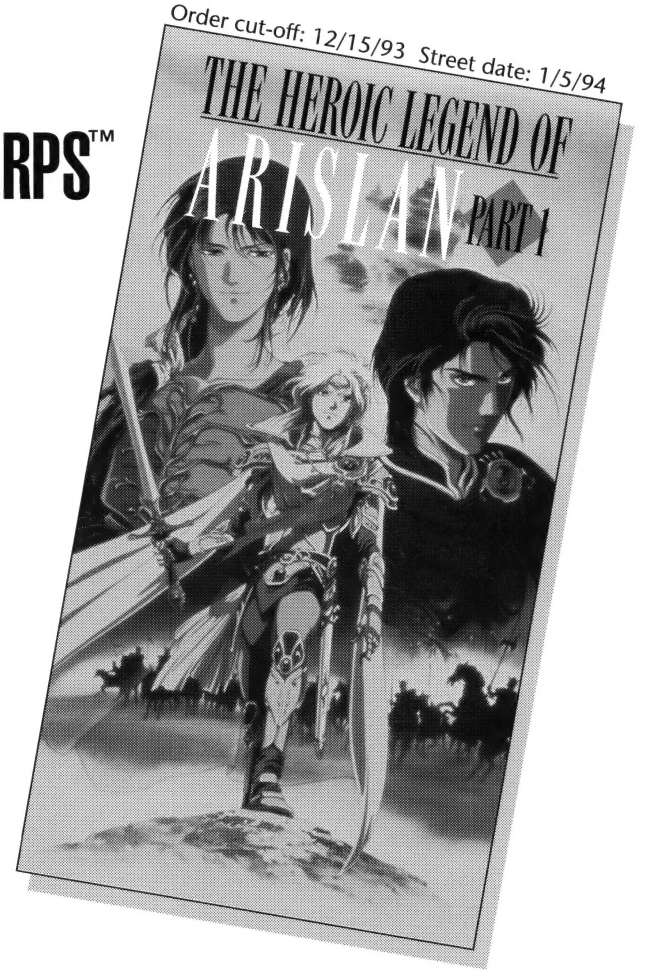

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Typo Express, Inc

Printing
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SUBSCRIPTION

6 issues: $25 US, $26.75 Can (GST included), or $40 US overseas. Check or money-order must be drawn to IANUS Publications.
For a sample copy send $6 US, $6.42 Can (GST included), or $8 US overseas
Postage & Handling included.

IANUS PUBLICATIONS
5000, Iberville St., #332,
Montréal, Qc., Canada, H2H 2S6

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PROTOCULTURE ADDICTS #26. January/February 1994. The Anime & Manga magazine. Published bimonthly by IANUS PUBLICATIONS INC., 5000 Iberville Street, Studio #332, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H2H 2S6. Fax: (514) 523-8680.

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WHAT IS BEING ORIGINAL ?

Last September, I was browsing through some messages on the nets when I noticed a comment saying that most of our articles "look like they were either copied directly off the nets or from other english anime magazines". Someone else agreed, adding that we "really do need to get some original articles". I also remember one comment I read in the past about PA having too many articles translated from NEWTYPE.

PROTOCULTURE ADDICTS *do* have original articles. Give us some credit, guys! Nevertheless, I admit that we are taking some of our articles or news from the Net and from newsletters. The explanation is very simple: the Net and fanzine reach a minority of the anime fans. You must admit that the Net is used by an elite among the fandom. The topics discussed there don't reach the general public (which is not always aware of its existence or simply don't have an easy access). Club's zines or newsletters generally are only distributed locally. By repeating the best articles (always with permission of its author and a previous agreement with the 'zine editor) or the most interesting news items we only make them available to a larger number of fans. Is that being less original?

The other reason is that, paradoxically, publishing professionally is leaving us less time to do what was once a hobby. Most of our time now goes to administrative task and to our most profitable publications. We must rely on contributors for the magazines. When we see an interesting article, either on the Net or in a fanzine, we check if we can use it — just to bring our readers the best. We NEVER use a text without permission or copy somebody's else article. Sometime we use an article published elsewhere as source material but that is just a normal process in writing papers. Is that being less original?

The third reason is that PA is not aimed at the knowledgeable fan (the one we find on the Net for example) but toward the novice or the average fan who does not necessary know much about anime (and who are sometimes not even aware of the USMC, AnimEigo or Streamline releases). That is why we keep the magazine basic, not venturing into in-depth articles but giving a short introduction to as many new anime as possible. Is that being less original?

Concerning the use of translation from NEWTYPE, we have never put in PA an article taken directly from a Japanese magazine. We translate articles to use them as source material. There is no harm in doing that and even if we would publish articles directly translated from Japanese it would still be welcome from the large majority of our readers since they cannot read Japanese (neither do I). We are just trying to make the information available to a greater number of people. Is that being less original?

We are doing our best with the means we have. In the last year, we have tried harder. I hope it shows. The anime industry is still rather indifferent, but the feedback from the fans is very good and encouraging. Thanks to all of you. We intend to continue our best this year with the help of the fans who think that our work is making a difference. Despite the fact that moving our office caused lots of delays, we can assure you that PA will be on time this year.

As last word: VIDEO GIRL AI shows us all the virtue that an original video can offer. PORCO ROSSO shows what we must do to preserve it: FIGHT PIRATES!!! So, give the original a chance and do not encourage video pirates.

Claude J. Pelletier

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Other illustrations from:

ANIMAGE Vol. 122. ANIME V Vol. 76-81. MACROSS II The Role-Playing Game. NEWTYPE 6-1993, 11-1993. PORCO ROSSO, Aircraft models & Drawings, from Model Graphix, 64 pgs. PORCO ROSSO, The Art of, 210 pgs. PORCO ROSSO, Hayao Miyazaki's Daydream Data Notes, 112 pgs. PORCO ROSSO MEMORIAL, 90 pgs. PORCO ROSSO, Roman Album, 146 pgs. PORCO ROSSO, This is Animation Picture Book, 42 pgs. VIDEO GIRL AI manga (Jump Comics).

All other illustrations came from promotional artwork, cover art, or directly from the animation.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

MANGA

Masakazu Katsura, responsible for the manga VIDEO GIRL AI, has a new manga series in Japan call DNA 2, which has started in #36-37 of Shonen Jump. (The Rose #38)

MAGAZINES

ANIME UK MAGAZINE #8 features Tekkaman Blade, Orguss, Ah My Goddess and anime in Europe. #9 features Genesis Survivor Gaiarth, Ramayana, RG Veda, and Arislan. #10 will have Patlabor 2002 and reports on the Anime Expo and Anime America cons. (The Rose #38)

ANIME UK NEWSLETTER, the forerunner of the ANIME UK MAGAZINE, has been taken over by Jonathan Weeks and has been renamed ANIMEJIN. Helen MacCarthy, editor of both publications, handed the newsletter's reins to Jonathan. He is offering subscriptions and can be contacted at J. Weeks, 65 The High, Streatham High Rd., London SW16 1EY. (The Rose #38)

MANGAJIN #30 features an article on the Japanese hotels, plus translations of the manga "Hotel" about the life of an hotel staff and their guests. #31 features an article on the tradition of Christmas in Japan, an interview with Ishinomori Shotaro author of JAPAN INC and HOTEL, plus part II of the manga "Hotel". #32 features an article on the *Shukanshi*, Japan's weekly "gossip" magazines, plus translations of the manga "Dr Slump" by Toriyama Akira. MANGAJIN is great to learn Japanese language and culture with manga. Each month it offers articles, reviews, basic Japanese lessons, and manga translations. They have also released in book form the MANGAJIN'S BASIC JAPANESE THROUGH COMICS compiling the first 24 lessons for $14.95 US.

VIDEO GAMES

International Computer Entertainment (ICE) released an AKIRA computer game for Christmas. It is first offered for Amiga, CD32, PC, PC CD ROM, and in Spring '94, will be also available for Sega Megadrive, Super Nintendo and Gameboy. (Manga Mania #5)

Viz is releasing the RANMA 1/2 game for the Super Nintendo. The pricing should be around $100. The demo of this game is impressive and worth having just to watch the animated sequences. Scheduled for December release. (The Rose #38)

FLASHES FROM THE US

Landmark Inc. has bought the rights to the original black and white episodes of ASTRO BOY. They have plans to colorize them and redo the soundtrack for possible TV or video release. (The Rose #38)

The New Adventures of GIGANTOR is on the Sci-Fi Channel as part of its Monday-Friday morning Cartoon Quest line-up. It airs at 8 AM E.T. In September, the first 4 episodes were shown in prime time to launch the series. (The Rose #38). The 51-episode half-hour program is a production of Tokyo Movie Shinsha, and is a sequel to the 1964 program produced by TCJ Animation and brought state-side by Fred Ladd. (FPS #3)

Alan Letz of HARMONY GOLD says that the company is interested in getting back into the anime scene. They are currently viewing films from Tatsunoko, Toei and Idol. (The Rose #38)

Landmark Entertainment is syndicating the original KIMBA THE WHITE LION episodes, rewriten and re-edited for today's international audiences, featuring new musical scores and colorization. (FPS #3)

The animated NINJA HIGH SCHOOL, based on Ben Dunn's comics, will not be produced. The deal has fallen through, alas. (FPS #3)

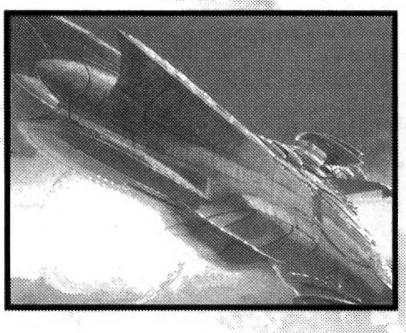
According to FPS #3, the ultracute Japanese super-hero television series SAILOR MOON is supposed to have hit US airwaves this fall. Anyone knows anything about that?

STARBLAZERS videos are being re-released by Voyager. Originally released in Japan as SPACE CRUISER YAMATO, these videos represent the epic saga of the intrepid Starblazers. Up to volume #28 is available at $19.95 each. (The Rose #38)

ANIME PROJECTS

A new BGC spin-off is in the planning stage! It will be called BUBBLEGUM SMASH. That's also the case for MEGAZONE 23 IV. (FPS #3).

There is another live-action GUYVER movie in the works from director Steve Wang (Predator, Kung Fu Rascals) coming in 1994. This time it will be "serious". (The Rose #38)



The new MACROSS OVA series will consist in four forty-minute volumes. Set 100 years after MACROSS II, the heroine will be an idol singer made with computer graphics... shades of MEGAZONE 23! (FPS #3). And there is a live-action MACROSS movie in pre-production. (The Rose #38)

There is another YAMATO story in production for summer '94. Designs by Syd Mead and Makoto Kobayashi, story by Leiji Matsumoto, and even some computer graphics. (Manga Mania #5).

ANIME NEWS

CARTOONS

Jean "Moebius" Giraud's animated AIRTIGHT GARAGE adaptation is back on the road to production, but this time with Akira Kurosawa's U.S. production company. (FPS #3)

Dark Horse Comics is producing an animated movie based on the successful ALIENS VS. PREDATOR comic. (FPS #3)

Twenty more BATMAN: THE ANIMATED SERIES episodes will be made and sprinkled among the reruns next season, for a total of eighty-five episodes. The series has also been renewed right up to the 1996-1997 season. One of the new episodes will feature Neil Gaiman's SANDMAN character, and possibly be written by Gaiman himself. Gaiman says he envisions John Hurt voicing Sandman. Warner Bros. also produced a BATMAN animated feature to be released this Christmas. (FPS #3)

A Taiwanese-animated version of the 1987 Hong Kong film A CHINESE GHOST STORY is reportedly in the making under the direction of Hsiu Hak, a live-action director. The fantastic world of ghosts, demons, witchcraft, and bumbling tax collectors should be a natural for animation; watch for it. (FPS #3)

DON BLUTH STUDIO in Ireland, who filed for bankruptcy, has been refinanced by Media Assets out of Hong Kong, and THUMBELINA is now scheduled to be released this summer by MGM. A TROLL IN CENTRAL PARK and THE PEPPLE AND THE PENGUIN should be out also in 1994. (FPS #3)

Twenty-two one-hour episodes of the animated ROBOCOP series have been created, scheduled to air early 1994 on the heels of the ROBOCOP 3 movie. The series was produced by Toronto's Skyvision entertainment in asssociation with Orion Pictures. (FPS #3)

VIDEO RELEASES

GUYVER 4	USR	D	60	$24.95	JAN
ROBOTECH 11-20	FHE	D	45	$14.95 ea	JAN
UY MOVIE 5	AE	S	90	$39.95	1/19
UY MOVIE 3 (LD)	AE	S	93	$54.95	1/19
BURN UP!	ADV	S	50	$29.95	1/26
ORGUSS 7-8	USR	D	55	$24.95 ea	1/31
DEMON CITY SHINJUKU	USMC	S	82	$29.95	2/2
U-JIN BRAND	USMC	S	45	$29.95	2/2
SHONAN BAKUSOZUKU	AE	S	52	$34.95	2/2
ARCADIA OF MY YOUTH	AE	S	130	$39.95	2/2
RANMA 1/2 TV 3	VV	D	50	$29.95	2/9
GUYVER 5	USR	D	60	$24.95	2/9
BUBBLEGUM CRISIS 1-8	AE	S		$24.95 ea	2/23
UY TV 12	AE	S	100	$39.95	2/23
AD POLICE (LD)	AE	S	120	TBA	2/23
UY MOVIE 6	AE	S	77	$39.95	3/30
UY MOVIE 4 (LD)	AE	S	94	$54.95	3/30
GAIARTH 3	AE	S	N/A	$34.95	3/30
RIDING BEAN	AE	D	46	$19.95	3/30
UY TV 13	AE	S	100	$34.95	4/20
BUBBLEGUM CRASH (LD)	AE	S	N/A	TBA	4/20
UY TV 14	AE	S	100	$34.95	5/25
UY MOVIE 5 (LD)	AE	S	90	$54.95	5/25
UY TV 15	AE	S	100	$34.95	6/29
UY MOVIE 6 (LD)	AE	S	90	$54.95	7/27
AH! MY GODDESS	AE	S	N/A	TBA	TBA

EVENTS

ANIME AMERICA '94 is to be held July 29-31 at the San Jose Red Lion Inn (408-453-4000). Guest of Honor is Go Nagai (Devilman, Mazinger Z). Price: $40 until March 20, $45 until July 1st, $50 at the door. Anime America '94, 298 4th Ave. #472-SD, San Francisco, CA 94118. Ph: (415) 241-8823. (The Rose #38).

KATSU-CON ICHI is a fan-run anime convention scheduled for February 17-19, 1995, in the Holiday Inn Executive Center, in the city of Virginia Beach, VA, near Norfolk. Guests include: Daniel Fahs, Sue Shambaugh, John & Jason Waltrip. Contact: Katsu Productions, PO Box 11582, Blacksburg, VA 24060-1582. (FPS #3)

OTAKON 94, an East Coast Japanese Animation Fan Convention, will be held July 29-31 at the Days Inn Penn State, State College, PA. Guests will be Robert DeJesus, Lorraine Savage, Sue Shambaugh, Steve Pearl, Jay Harvey, and more. There will be video programming, dealer's room, art show, auction, gaming, etc. Room rate at the Days Inn will be around $62, call 1-800-325-3535 for reservations. Registration will be $21 until May 31st or $25 at the door. OTAKON '94, c/o Bill Johnston, 661-A Waupelani Drive, State College, PA 16801.

I-CON 13, the largest multi-track convention in USA, will be held April 15th to 17th on the campus of the State University of New York at Stony Brook. They expect an attendance between 4500 (last year) and 8000. The Japanese animation track will be important. Among guests are Peter Chow, a Hong Kong movie producer (A Chinese Ghost Story), and Vanguard Media, producers of video animation and interactive media CD-ROM projects (USMC, Ninja High School, and "The Cartoon Blank" featuring some of the best New Yorker cartoonists). For more info, I-CON, P.O. Box 550, Stony Brook, NY 11790, USA.

KADOKAWA FALLEN

Haruki Kadokawa, head-honcho of Kadokawa Shoten (publisher of NEWTYPE, producers of LODOSS WAR, ARISLAN, SILENT MOBIUS) was arrested for smuggling cocaine. He has lost his position as president of the company, but his actions could also have great repercussions on the company's reputation and financial situation. Their latest movie, REX, was taken off the screen and the government is considering withdrawing their publications from Japanese schools. Lets just hope that this situation will not bring cuts in anime production and jeopardize NEWTYPE. (Manga Mania #5)

ISLAND WORLD

Island World Communications, which releases anime in English in Britain (under the label Manga Video) and has a club of over 7,000 people, is publishing a monthly newsletter with synopses of forthcoming videos, letters from fans, info on upcoming events, competitions, etc. They essentially talk about their own products. A sister company called ULTRA VIDEO releases Japanese live-action films and TV series. Island World Communications, 40 St. Peter's Road, London W6 9BD, UK. Ph: 081-748-9000. FAX: 081-748-0841. (From The Rose #26).

ABRAMSON MOVES TO CPM

Central Park Media announced on November 30th that Jules Abramson has been appointed Senior Director of Sales and Marketing. John O'Donnell, Managing Director, stated "that we are pleased to have an experienced sales executive of Jules' caliber join our ranks. As Japanimation expands from a cult to mainstream product line, we will bolster our sales and marketing efforts as the company continues to grow". Abramson was a Senior Vice President for Polygram Records. he entered the video industry in 1982 with Media Home Entertainment and was with Academy Entertainment as Vice President of Sales for 6 years. (CPM)

BGC RE-RELEASED!

BUBBLEGUM CRISIS, the Japanese Cyberpunk classic, is re-released with a brand new packaging featuring a special SpineScene™. There are new subtitles: AnimEigo continues to have the most technically advanced subtitling ability, and they have resubtitled this release to take advantage of technical improvements. And that is not all: AnimEigo has also dropped the retail price from $34.95 to $24.95 each! There is even a package deal: buy 7, get one free. By ordering a "Pack of Gum", you obtain all 8 episodes for $175 US (this is a limited time offer). Available on February 23th. (AnimEigo)

RECENT RELEASES

DEMON CITY SHINJUKU

In this suspenseful tale directed by Yoshiaki Kawajiri, the tyrannical Levih Rah has created a Demon City in Shinjuku and now plans to destroy the entire planet in three days time. No one has dared to cross the foul moat that Rah and his band of fugitives have built around the Demon City _ until now. Desperate to rescue her father, the beautiful Sayaka Rama along with Kyoua, a streetwise teenager, venture into Demon City. Will they be able to overcome Rah's band of thugs and destroy Levih Rah before he destroys them? US MANGA CORPS. Cat. # USM 1107, 82 min., $29.95.

U-JIN BRAND

Three love stories like you've never seen before! In the first, song writer Tsurujiro Kazama must get to know each singer before composing a best-selling song for her. After many conquests, he still has only one true love, whom he admires from afar. In the second story, Sachiro's fiancé is stolen by a rival and her only hope of winning him back is to hire the services of Toyama No Benbei, seducer extraordinaire. In the third story, Iwata's girlfriend, Tomoko, won't rest until they are married. Yet, he dreams of another. Will love conquer all in these tangled tales written by well-known writer U-Jin? US MANGA CORPS, Cat. #USM 1075, 45 min., $29.95.

LYCANTHROPE LEO

Viz announced the release of a new, exciting "Viz Premiere Comics" (Viz imprint for mature subjects). LYCANTHROPE LEO is a dark fantasy manga set in modern-day Japan which tells the tale of a secret race of lycanthropes, or were-beasts who live among us. This group is divided between carnivorous and herbivorous lycanthropes who are systematically persecuted by a paranoid group called "the Hunters", humans who are driven by the fear that lycanthropes threaten the human race. LYCANTHROPE LEO is written by Kengo Kaji, drawn by Kenji Okamura, and translated by Toshifumi Yoshida. This seven-issue series of 40-page black and white volume is priced at $2.95 ($4.00 Can) for each issue and will be shipped March 1st.

In the first issue, we meet Leo Takizawa, who is an ordinary teenager leading an ordinary life... at least until his seventeenth birthday, when things started to *change*. He has begun to feel much more energetic and powerful. He even sets an incredible record during a practice at the high school track, breaking Carl Lewis' world record! After returning home from school, his dog begins to fear him, and his father, learning about his feats, seems to be very angry. Leo's father gets a mysterious phone call, and Leo is taken to a remote cabin, where he is told a devastating secret that will change the course of his life forever. However, the "change" did not go unnoticed, and he suddenly becomes a target.

STEREOGRAM

Viz Communications and Cadence Books announce the release of STEREOGRAM, a book presenting a series of special three dimentional images. "Stereogram" is the generic term for two dimensional images which, when viewed in the correct way, appear to be three dimensional and allows the viewer the opportunity to experience realism, depth, clarity and perspective. It is a kind of affordable virtual reality.

Shogakukan introduced a two-volume book featuring stereograms last year and catalyzed a stereogram sensation which took Japan by storm. The series sold close to a million copies in Japan and prompted other Japanese publishers to release over two dozen other stereogram books. Recently, posters featuring stereo images have proliferated through art galleries, and in malls throughout the United States, where observers gather for hours to absorb and be absorbed by the amazing images "hidden within". STEREOGRAM is the first English book of its kind and features a compilation of the most sensational images captured in the two-volume series, along with details on the development of this technology by experts such as Howard Rheingold and Christopher Tyler, one of the pioneers of random dot stereograms. This 96-page deluxe color book features high-quality stereograms and retails at $12.95. It will be available on March 1st. (Viz)

DARK HORROR

This is a collection of five, 8-page horror stories by Ippongi Bang. Originally published in Japan, Antarctic Press has translated these tales and brought them to America! Stories includes: "The Girl who wanted to be thin", "The Bully's Train-Station Tragedy", "See a Flower, Pluck It Up...", "What You Get For Being a Material Girl", and "The Passionate Love of the Giving Boy". B&W, 40 pgs, $2.95.

SENTAI

Sentai is a comic-size magazine dealing with the world of Japanese live-action, science-fiction, and super-hero TV shows and movies, as well as the ever-expanding Asian fantasy and horror genre. This premiere issue features complete coverage of 1993's GODZILLA VS. MOTHRA, as well as the latest news on the "Big G's" newest screen epic, GODZILLA VS. MECHA-GODZILLA! All this, plus an all-new ULTRAMAN series report, and all the latest news on Japan's live action super-hero shows. From Antarctic Press, 32 pgs, $2.95.

PROJECT A-KO SETTEI SPECIAL

Antarctic Press, in cooperation with Malibu Graphics, present this full-color special, as a companion to Eternity's upcoming four-issue adaptation of the PROJECT A-KO movie! The special will include rare production artwork, as well as pinups and stories by talented American manga artists Ben Dunn, Robert DeJesus, Lea Hernandez, Shon Howell, and others. 32 pgs, $2.95.

NEXT ISSUE

Next issue, don't miss our special on ROBOTECH with an exclusive preview of the new Jack McKinney's novel ZENTRAEDI REBELLION, review of the tapes, LD and other ROBOTECH products, some Robotechies' feedbacks, and an article "Explaining Minmei" on the idol singer phenomenon. Don't miss it!

BATTLE ANGEL ALITA GRAPHIC NOVEL

Viz Comics announced the graphic novel of BATTLE ANGEL ALITA for March. It tells the provocative tale of a young cyborg's search for her identity and her own humanity amidst great adversity and danger. Under the shadows of the glittering city of Tiphares, masses of humans and cyborgs struggle to survive among the scrapyard town and its factories. In this dark world filled with thugs and criminals who live beyond the bounds of the law, emerges a beautiful young woman, a cyborg who was salvaged from the ruins of the scrapyard by a brilliant cyberphysician named Ido. She remembers nothing about her past or of how she came to the scrapyard city but quickly rediscovers amazing fighting abilities which she uses instinctively whenever she encounters danger. She is given the name "Alita" by Ido with whom she develops a distinct bond. Together, they work as bounty hunters. Released March 22, this 244-page trade paperback compiles all nine issues of BATTLE ANGEL ALITA Part One and retails for $16.95 US.

MACROSS II GRAPHIC NOVEL

In MACROSS II, fans will again be able to enjoy the three-way romance so popular in the first series. An ambitious young male reporter (Hibiki Kanzaki), a beautiful female ace pilot (Sylvie Gena) and a mysterious alien female (Ishtar) are the main characters this time as originally designed by Mikimoto; mecha designs by the immortal Shoji Kawamori are also back in all their transforming glory. Eighty years after the events of DO YOU REMEMBER LOVE?, the 1984 MACROSS theatrical release, Earth and the Zentraedi have integrated in one peaceful society. When alien Marduk forces, using renegade Zentreadi warriors and their own war songs, are attacking Earth, US Space fleet must use again the SuperDimentional Fortress. Can Macross, believed to be the legendary Alus ship, save the Earth once more? This 304-page graphic novel will be released on April 19 and retails for $16.95 US ($24.25 CAN).

PROMISE

Viz starts a new series of Shojo Manga (girls' comics) and PROMISE, by Keiko Nishi (regarded by many Japanese readers as the master of the form), is the first title. Shojo's stories concentrate on characters and real-life situations, but despite their origin and Japanese name, these stories can be enjoyed by both men and women. This first title features two bittersweet tales of love and longing. In "Promise", a young Japanese woman, troubled by second thoughts regarding her mother's upcoming marriage, is befriended by a young man who seems to know her intimately — in fact, he might well have been her twin brother. In "Since You've Been Gone", an unfaithful husband away on a business trip realizes too late the true value of his wife's love for him. B&W, 80 pgs, $5.95.

STREET FIGHTER II COMICS

On April 5th Viz Comics and Tokuma Publishing will release the comic adaptation of one of the best-selling video games of all time, STREET FIGHTER II. This eight-issue deluxe full color series will capture the explosive action and martial arts excitement of the video game and will explore the lives and backgrounds of all the characters that have made the game so exciting. Now everyone can enjoy the history of Chun-Li's past and the reasons that motivate each character to fight their opponents.

The popularity of this title will be further enhanced by the release of STREET FIGHTER II the motion picture, which is slated for a Summer 1994 release. E. R. Pressman Film Co. and Capcom Co., Ltd announced that the feature will be written and directed by action-adventure veteran Steven DeSouza (Die Hard, Commando, Running Man). The film brings together twelve martial artists who duel in the STREET FIGHTER II tradition and the storyline will involve a contemporary story of a hostage crisis and rescue.

STREET FIGHTER II, published by Tokuma Publishing, comic adaptation by Masaomi Kanazaki (XENON). Monthly, full color, 32 pages, $2.95 US ($4.00 CAN), shipping on April 5th, 1994.

MANGA & ANIME-RELATED BOOK RELEASES

FEBRUARY

ANIMERICA VOL. 2	2	VIZ	$4.95/$6.50
ANIME UK	12	AUK	$5.75/$750
BATTLE ANGEL ALITA PART 3	4	VIZ	$2.75/$3.75
BIO-BOOSTER ARMOR GUYVER	5	VIZ	$2.75/$3.75
CARAVANN KIDD VALENTINE'S DAY SP.	1	DH	$2.50/$3.40
DARK TALES OF DAILY HORROR	1	AP	$2.95/$3.95
GOKU	5	AP	$2.95/$3.95
MAISON IKKOKU PART 2	2	VIZ	$2.95/$4.00
MANGAJIN	34	MJ	$4.50
MANGAZINE	32	AP	$2.95/$3.95
MERMAID FOREST	3	VIZ	$2.75/$3.75
MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM 0083	4	VIZ	$4.95/$6.50
PROJECT A-KO — SETTEI SPECIAL	1	AP	$2.95/$3.95
PROMISE	1	VIZ	$5.95/$8.00
RANMA 1/2 PART 3	3	VIZ	$2.75/$3.75
ROBOTECH: INVID WAR AFTERMATH	4	EC	$2.50/$3.30
ROBOTECH: RETURN TO MACROSS	12	EC	$2.50/$3.30
SENTAI	1	AP	$2.95/$3.95
SILBUSTER	2	AP	$2.95/$3.95
ULTRAMAN CLASSIC	2	VIZ	$4.95/$6.50
VENGER ROBO	4	VIZ	$2.75/$3.75
VERSION	2.7	DH	$2.50/$3.40

NOTES:

AP: Antarctic Press; DH: Dark Horse; EC: Eternity Comics.

PORCO ROSSO CHARACTERS

by Martin Ouellette

Porco Rosso

One of the numerous bounty hunters flying over the Mediterranean Sea to clean it of the pirates infesting its skies. He was an ace of the Italian Air Force during World War I but left the army after the war. He cast a spell on himself to become a pig because he survived and his friends did not. Porco is in love with Gina but just cannot bring himself to tell her because he fears that she will not accept it (after all, the poor guy looks like a pig!). The Mediterranean air pirates are scared out of their wits of him and his red Savoia S-21 fighter. Both his appearance and the color of his plane are the reasons behind his nickname: Porco Rosso (the Red Pig in Italian). Porco's real name is Marco Paggot (Gina always calls him Marco).

Fio Piccolo

The grand-daughter and expected successor of Master Piccolo at the head of his aviation repair company. Although she is only 17 years old, Fio is a gifted engineer and mechanic, her masterpiece being the near-total redesign and rebuilding of Porco's Savoia S-21. Cheerful and happy-go-lucky, her positive attitude starts to change Porco's view on life. She also has a fiery side, as nobody steps on Fio's toes, even a mob of armed to the teeth air pirates! At the end of the movie, Porco and Donald have a duel to decide which of the two will get her. Fio has a crush on Porco, for she sees the man behind the pig.

Donald Curtis

A very good American pilot, Curtis was called by the air pirates to eliminate Porco. A frank, open-hearted and cheerful man, Curtis is also a gentleman and when he meets a lovely woman, his first words are often "Will you marry me?" Since he is rather attractive, women do not laugh in his face too much. One of his greatest desires is to, one day, be the president of the United States. He fell for Gina the moment he met her and later, when he meets Fio, the same thing happens, to Porco's (and Fio's) despair. Curtis' plane is a deep sea blue Curtiss R3C-0 fighter seaplane.

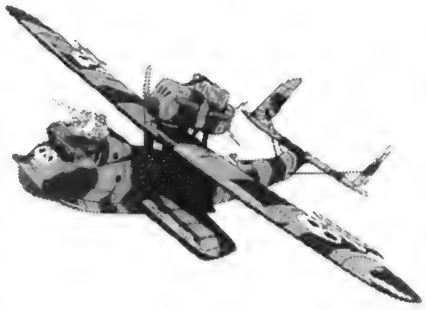
Gina

The owner of Adriano Hotel, Gina is considered a kind of Madonna (not the pop signer, the religious image...) by all the flyers who visit her place (including pirates). When she was a kid, she organized a flying club, whose members included her three late husbands and Porco. Porco is the last remaining member of this club. All three of Gina's husbands met their end in plane related events, including war. Gina has been waiting for Marco to forgive himself for quite a long time, but he stubbornly continues to see himself as a no good pig...

Master Piccolo

The president of Piccolo Company in Milan, Master Piccolo has been Porco's official mechanic for a very long time but has now given this title to his ace mechanic/engineer/granddaughter Fio, whom he expects to name owner of his repair shop very soon. Porco trusts him implicitly.

Mamma Aiuto



One of the most prominent pirate groups. Porco is considered their biggest enemy and after he gave them a last beating, they decided to enlist with the "Aero Viking Association". The boss of the Mamma Aiuto is a big, burly man, who thinks of himself as a higher-up of society, something that does not preclude him from acting like a loud-mouthed lunatic whose favorite weapon is a 20mm cannon which he uses as if it were a sub-machinegun. All the members of his team are a bunch of stinkers, as they never take a bath (or brush their teeth).

Aero Viking Association

An organization of seven pirate crews who operate in the Mediterranean and Adriatic seas. It is their leaders who decided to call Donald Curtis from America to rid them of their greatest enemy: Porco Rosso. However, they feel bad about having to call a foreigner to take care of their "problem". At the end of the movie, the Italian Army sends a task force after them, as they are getting troublesome.

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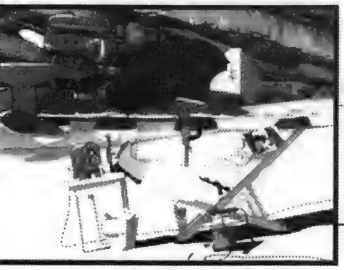


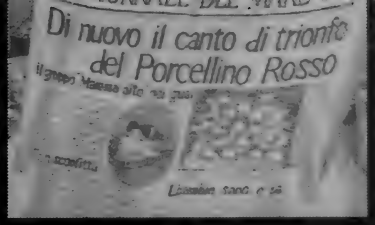
PORCO ROSSO SYNOPSIS

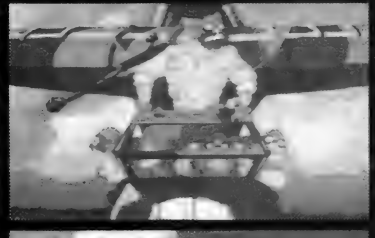
by Martin Ouellette

In the late 1920s, on a small, desert island in the Adriatic Sea. In a sun inundated enclave, a radio blares the latest hits, while the pilot of a red plane sitting in the lagoon catches a few Z's. The phone rings, to his dismay. With a few curses, the pilot removes the news paper that was shading him from the sun and, to our surprise, he is a pig! "Yeah?! What do you want?" At the other end, the voice tells Porco Rosso (the pilot's nickname) to get going because a bunch of air pirates, named "Mamma Aiuto", have been spotted in the vicinity. Porco makes a face and answers that he does not need a cheap job. The voice argues that this isn't a cheap job, a charter ship from Venice has been hijacked and that the pirates are stealing the fuel from the ship. Porco is suspicious and asks the voice to give him the real story. The voice hesitates for a few seconds, but tells him that a bunch of little school girls were taken hostage. Porco smiles and tells him that it will cost more than he thinks. The voice answers that it will apply all necessary clauses of the contract to the case. Porco goes to his plane and lifts off, asking his engine to be a nice girl (he calls it "engine-chan").

Some time before the phone rang: The Mamma Aiuto pirates attack a charter ship and stop it under the threat that they will sink it. As the plane stops in front of the ship, little girls are having a field day about the fact that they are going to be kidnapped. While the pirates take them off the ship and load them into the plane, the little girls ask questions like "Are you bad guys?" and such. One of the pirates asks his boss if he wants to bring all 15 of the kids. He answers in the affirmative, saying that it is not nice to leave a lady behind. The Mamma Aiuto's plane takes off and, a few minutes later, Porco's plane comes into view. The crew of the ship quickly form a a human arrow pointing in the direction where the pirates disappeared and Porco throws his engine into high gear, in hot pursuit. He makes some fast calculations , taking into account the fact that the pirates are rather poor and want to save fuel, and decides to wait for them near the closest island. While on his way, he falls on a sightseeing plane loaded with cute girls, who find him unbearably charming and cool. Porco warns them that they could be kidnapped and that they must watch out for pirates.

On the Mamma Aiuto's plane: The pirate boss is trying to keep the kids off his face and asks one of his men to do something about the girls. Unluckily for the pirate boss, the guy he asks is the one who previously asked him if they should take all the kids. "See why I asked if you wanted all of them?!" Two of the little girls have made their way to the tail gunner's turret and start to bug him. One of them suddenly points in a direction, asking the other girl if she sees the cool red plane. The gunner goes crazy. "What?!! Where?!!" The little girl points with her finger. "Look! There!!" Porco, coming into view of the pirate's plane, arms his machineguns and plunges forward. At last, the gunner sees him and tries to fire at Porco, but the little girls complain that they can't see him, push the gunner away. Porco fires and blows up an engine. The kids are sure that they are going to crash, but the gunner reassures them: "We still have one engine!" The pirate boss hollers to his men to shoot the red plane down, but to no avail. The kids are in total awe and are having loads of fun bugging the pirates about the fact that they can't shoot Porco down. After a couple of passes, Porco pulls out his Morse code lamp and signals the pirates that they should listen to him. The pirate boss refuses and Porco makes two more passes, blowing the remaining engine and forcing the pirate's plane to land on the sea. The little girls, thinking that the plane will sink, start jumping into the water. The pirate boss tries to stop them saying that jumping into the sea is dangerous and, besides, they are valuable hostages. One of the kids looks at him and tells him not to worry, as they are swimming school students. Porco signals to the pirates again, telling them that he will allow them to keep half of their booty but that they must leave the other half behind as well as the little girls. His last message is rather scary: "Do it, or I will kill you!" The pirate boss, even with his plane sitting defenseless in the drink, refuses and taunts Porco to come and get him. Porco sighs and starts his last pass. The pirate boss pulls the trigger of his machinegun (it's more like a hand-held cannon!)...and it jams! The other pirates jump in front of him and start waving a white flag at Porco. He aborts his run and lands near the raft





containing the little girls. A few minutes later, he starts repairing an oil leak in his engine, while fifteen little girls are running around, driving him crazy...

At the restaurant of Hotel Adriano: A bunch of Adriatic Sea pirates are discussing the "Porco Rosso" phenomenon, still unable to believe that a pig is treated like a hero. The hiring of a young American pilot, named Curtis, is also a point of discussion, as he is not from the Adriatic region. This point is laid to rest when they learn that his grand-mother is one-quarter Italian. After all, they need him badly, as Porco is really hurting them. Curtis, standing near them, tells them to keep it down as Gina, the hotel's owner, starts to sing "Le Temps des Cerises", a beautiful French song (it is an authentic song of the time). Curtis looks at her with dreams in his eyes, while the pirates continue their conversation. Porco enters the restaurant and the pirates throw him a venomous look, saying that he is a fake. Curtis hushes them again. Porco goes to the bar, orders a drink and lights up a cigarette, when two noisy reporters nearly assault him, congratulating him on his latest success against the Mamma Aiuto. Tired of all this commotion preventing him from hearing Gina, Curtis goes to the bar, grabs the two reporters and forcibly sits them down. He goes back and starts to talk to Porco, who wants to know if the black plane in front of the hotel is his. Curtis answers affirmatively and Porco warns him about making a deal with the pirates, as they will probably betray him. The pirates hear Porco's declaration and jump to their feet, menacing. Gina intervenes, warning them to be good boys. Blushing, the pirates say that they don't work within 50km of her hotel, and that, when they are there, they get along with everybody, including the pig. Curtis says bye to Porco, goes to Gina and asks her to marry him. The pirates loudly protest.

In Gina's appartment: Gina tells Porco that she thinks Curtis is funny. "The first time he sees me and he asks me to marry him". Porco makes a face. "So I told him that I married three pilots and they all died. the first during the war, the second in an Atlantic crossing attempt and the third one in Asia". Porco stops eating and looks at her in surprised sadness. "When did you get the news?" Gina fills their glasses. "Today. They found his remains in a forest in Bengal. It's been three years, I have no more tears to cry." Porco lifts his glass. "For my friend". Gina looks at him and tells him that he is her best friend, for he stayed with her all these years. Porco smiles. "The only thing I don't like here is that picture. Why don't you take it off?" Gina tells not to break his promise, that this picture is the only one left of him as a human being, the only photo of Marco Pagot. Porco takes a serious look. "This American cowboy worries me..."

At the bank: Porco deposits a lot of cash in his account. The bank clerk is impressed and tells him that he would like to make as much money as Porco. Porco ignores the comment and makes his plane payment of the month.

At the gunsmith shop: Porco is welcomed by the apprentice and told that his order is ready. Porco takes a big package and practically unwraps it, revealing a brand new machinegun. He checks it carefully and asks the apprentice for 60 rounds of ammo. Porco turns to the gunsmith. "The country is getting busy, he?" The gunsmith throws Porco a look. "It seems like the government is going to change. If I were you, I would be careful. You are a known anti-fascist. You'll be branded an outlaw." Porco scoffs "words like 'country' and 'law' mean squat to a pig". The gunsmith acquiesces and Porco pays for his stuff (a whole lot of cash) and leaves with his package.

Over the Adriatic Sea: The planes of the Aero Viking Association (the air pirates) are flying in formation. The pirate boss of the Mamma Aiuto looks at the line of old, clunky planes and whines about the fact that he has to hang around such a pitiful group. As the Mamma Aiuto plane gets into formation, the other planes make comments about the fact that the Mamma Aiuto gang don't have enough money to paint their brand new tail section. The

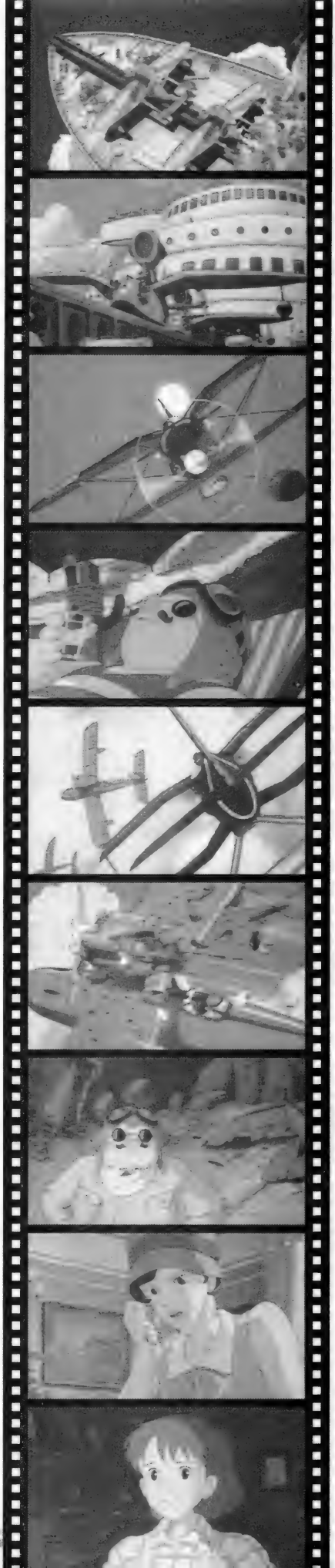
pirate boss signals to the closest plane and asks him if Curtis is there. The other plane answers by the affirmative, and points to the sky, where Curtis is hiding in the sun, as planned. At that moment, one of the lookouts signals that the target is in sight. One of the Mamma Aiuto asks if they are going to attack such a big ship. Another pirate signals that this is why they prepared so well and not to be afraid. An old pirate signals that his engine is showing some problems and that he is going to back-up the others. An animated discussion on cunning and stinginess follows. That is, until they see that the ship they are going to attack has its own fighter escort. The escort fighters jump the pirates, causing chaos in their rank. Curtis lunges forward and goes after the escort fighters with gusto...

Porco's hideout: Porco looks at his plane's engine and decides that he needs a new one. For that, he will have to go to Milan. On the radio, the program is interrupted with the news that the Aero Viking Association has successfully attacked one of the biggest ships in the Mediterranean Sea and left a message for Porco: "You are next, come and get it, pig!!" Porco shuts down the radio and says that he has other things to do than taking care of these bozos. As he is getting in his plane, he asks engine-chan not to let him down...

In the air, over the Mediterranean: Porco is flying over the Mediterranean Islands and, as he gets near a patch of bad weather, decides to go below the clouds. At one moment, his engine coughs and stops, but he is able to start it up again. He does not know that Curtis has been tailing him and only his fighter pilot sense saves himfrom Curtis' viscious surprise attack. Porco stomps his rudder pedals and evades the first pass. Porco decides that he does not have the time or the inclination to play with Curtis and plunges into the clouds; "See ya later, Cowboy!" As Porco gets out of the clouds, Curtis suddenly jumps him and Porco, surprised, can only holler a curse before he opens fire, sending a hail of tracer bullets straight into his engine. Porco's plane dissapears into a cloud, trailing smoke and debris. Curtis exults, but soon understands that he needs proof of his kill. He goes down to sea level and finds a small, crimson painted piece of wood and decides that it will make a nice gift for his mom, back in Alabama. Curtis takes off again, but does not see porco, standing on a little island, near his badly damaged plane...

At the Hotel Adriano: Gina is getting ready to board her yacht, when a bellboy comes to tell her that Porco is on the phone. Gina runs inside and takes the phone; "Marco, is that you? Are you badly hurt? OK, I will go get you." Porco says that it will not be necessary since he is going to Milan to have his plane repaired. He tells Gina to give Curtis a little message next time she sees him: "See you next time, Cowboy!" Gina flares up, telling him that she is no bulletin board, she is tired of being treated as part of the landing gear and that he does not need to risk his life to impress her. Porco answers that "a pig who does not fly is just an ordinary pig". Gina, in a very soft voice, says "Marco, you fool..."

At master Piccolo's shop in Milan, Italy: Piccolo is standing in front of his shop, waiting for Porco. As Porco gets out of his truck and salutes his old friend, a cute, young girl gets into the driver's seat and tells them to get out of the way. Piccolo looks at Porco and tells him that he lost a lot of the plane this time and that it would be better to build another one from the ground up. Porco refuses, saying that he likes that one. As they get in, the girl in unwrapping the plane's fuselage and is exstatic over its design. Porco elbows Piccolo and asks who the cute girl is. Piccolo says that she is Fio, his grand-daughter from America. Porco comments that she doesn't look like him and Piccolo throws him a dirty look, "Don't you touch her!" Porco is surprised by the comment, but becomes serious once more and inofrms the old man that his opponent is Curtis and that he needs at least 15 more knots. They walk to an appartment in the back of the hangar and Piccolo lifts off the tarp covering a magnificient engine, which had been mounted on an Italian race plane. Porco warns him not to tune the engine too



delicately, as his plane is not a racer. Next, they go to Piccolo's office, where Porco spews a mountain (!!) of cash. Even that is not enough and Porco has to give Piccolo all the money he was saving for his meals and hotel. As he protests, Piccolo says that he will stay at the shop. Porco accepts but a detail bothers him; "I have not seen any of your sons since I got here. Where are they?" Piccolo says that all three of them left to find work. Porco gives him a questioning look; "who is going to design my plane?" "Fio" is Piccolo's matter of fact answer. Porco is worried, "that's the cute girl I just saw, right?" Piccolo confirms this and Porco is not happy. He tells Piccolo that he will look for another repairman, just as Fio enters the room. She heard the exchange and asks Porco if he does not want her to do the job because of her age or because she is a woman. Porco, embarrassed, answers "both". Fio smiles and asks him what makes a good pilot. Porco answers "inspiration". Fio tells him that she is happy he didn't say "experience" because she had heard from her grand-father that Porco had been a pilot at an early age. Porco says that this was in 1910, when he was 17. Fio grins, "that's the age I have right now. I can't change a lot of things about being a woman, but let me try to do the job, OK? If it doesn't work, don't pay me." Piccolo is sure that Fio will do a good job and Porco is convinced. Fio shoves a bunch of bed sheets in his arms and wishes him good night...

In the morning, Porco enters the engineering section of the shop and finds Fio sitting at a drawing table, where she is designing Porco's new plane. She informs him that it will be the same as it was before, but faster. Porco tells her that there is only one plane like that in the world and that the only person able to fly it correctly is him. Porco looks intently at the plans and makes a few technical comments. Fio asks him if he will let her continue and Porco responds affirmatively. He also tells her that working overnight does not do well for the complexion of a young, pretty girl. Fio beams at him...

Later, Piccolo presents to Porco all the people who will work on his plane. They are all women, because all the men are gone to find work in other cities. Even a few grand-mothers come in. Porco just can't believe that all these women are Piccolo's relatives. He wonders if they will be able to do the job but Piccolo reassures him, "Don't worry, will you. They're nice, they work hard and they're not scared of anything".

At the dinner table: Piccolo thanks God for a much needed job that will save him from bankruptcy and tells everybody to eat and work hard...

In a hangar near the shop: Piccolo is showing Porco the performance of the new engine. Porco is very impressed, but warns Piccolo not to over do it or his factory will be blown away (the hangar actually does fly off).

In Piccolo's shop: Porco approves a costly modification proposed by Fio, while Piccolo worries about the pile of bills accumulating. Fio, jumping for joy, thanks Porco for accepting her project and tells him that she loves him. Piccolo shoots him a look and tells him not to touch her...

In a theater: Porco meets Major Fierrari, an old friend of his. The major is not proud of the risks Porco is taking by coming back to Italy. He warns him that, this time, the government will not let him get away, that a warrant for his arrest will soon be issued. The reasons for his arrest make Porco laugh. Porco starts to get up. Fierrari asks him to come back into the Air Force. Porco throws him a look and tells him that he prefers being a pig rather than a fascist.

In the street: Fio sees Porco walking in the street and picks him up with the truck she borrowed to try Porco's plane tomorrow. Porco tells her that this will not be nec-

essary and shows her the fascist secret police agents following them in a black car. Fio is all surprised that they were following her because she was rebuilding Porco's plane. Fio asks Porco if he is a spy, throwing him into a laughing fit. Porco ends the game and loses the secret police car with his fancy driving.

Piccolo's shop: Piccolo tells Porco that he can fly anytime he's ready. Fio appears with a flight suit, says good bye to her family and starts to stuff her things into the plane/. Porco nearly blows a gasket and tells her that she is not coming. Fio doesn't even listen to him, makes a few modifications on a panel and sits into her improvised cockpit. Porco tries to convince the head strong girl not to go with him but Piccolo gets on Fio's side and Porco relents (not the last time!) and everybody exchanges good-byes. Piccolo opens the hangar door and secret police agents start to shoot at the plane. Porco fires his machineguns to disperse them and starts his run in the canal to get the plane airborne. It takes a few (a lot!) of acrobatics to get it into the air but, at the end, Porco is able to get the plane airborne. As they are flying over Lombardi, a military plane arrives and the pilot starts to wave at them. Porco supposes that it is Fierrari, showing them an escape route, for the fascist air force has laid a trap for them. Porco and Fio thank Fierrari and starts to follow him to the Adriatic Sea.

In the gardens of Hotel Adriano: Curtis intrudes on Gina's privacy and presents her a letter from a Hollywood studio that wants to produce a movie with the scenario he wrote. Gina is not impressed and refuses Curtis' offer to go with him to the States. She also laughs at his pretension of being president one day. Gina takes a dreamy expression and tells Curtis about her gamble with Porco. This is when Porco's plane appears. Gina goes outside and looks at the plane doing aerobatics. While she looks at the plane, she tells Curtis about her love for Marco and how she would want to be with him. The plane dissapears and Gina tells Curtis that she lost the gamble again. Curtis can't believe she's in love with a pig and Gina tells him to go to Hollywood alone.

In the air: Porco and Fio are having a discussion about Gina. Fio tells him that she knows about her and the fact that all the pilots of the Adriatic are in love with her. Porco tells her that she speculates a lot and cuts the conversation short by going down to refuel.

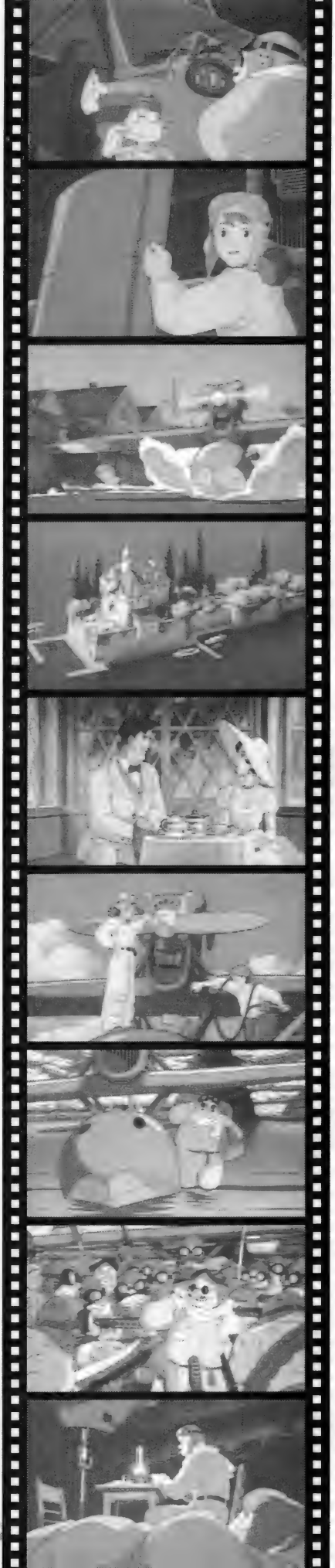
On the sea, near the island: The boy doing the refueling is surprised to find a girl in a fighter. Fio, bored to death, tells him not to mind her and to start refueling...

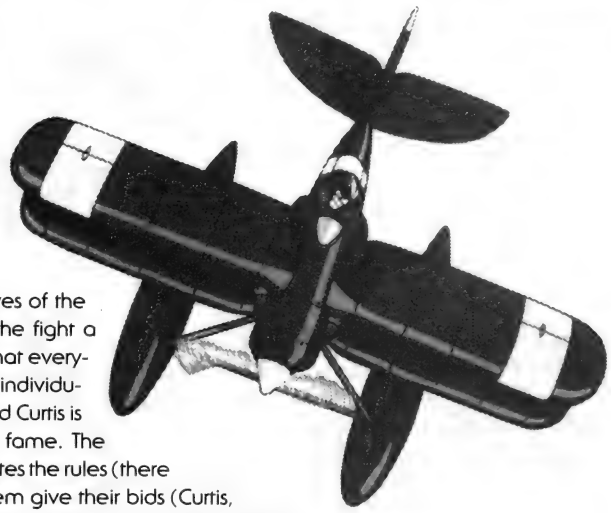
At the tavern, on the island: The people at the tavern are warning Porco about the fact that the air pirates are backed by powerful politicians and that his job could soon become dangerous, but Porco does not seem to be worried.

Back at the plane: Fio complains to Porco about the price of fuel. The boy who did the refueling is not happy about the fact that Fio doesn't want to pay him. Porco tells her not to mind, pay the boy and stuff "her big butt and her looks (?!) into the plane". Fio grumbles, pays the boy and tells Porco that she will add the gas bill to the others.

Porco's deserted island: Porco lands his plane and settles it on the beach. As he and Fio are looking around, the entire Aero Viking Association jumps them. Porco smiles and tells them that he knew they would be there. As they're ready to beat him to a pulp, the pirates discover that he is with a beautiful girl. When Porco tells them that she is the engineer who rebuilt his plane, the pirates just can't believe it. When they learn that Porco is deep in debt, they want to destroy his plane to make it worse but Fio intervenes and they decide to only lynch the pig. Fio flares up and tells them that they are a bunch of cowards to want to hurt him, because he came to avenge their soiled honor by fighting Curtis. The pirates are convinced , when Curtis appears (a grand appearance) and says that he will not run away from the fight. When Curtis sees Fio, it's love at first sight (as is usual with him) and he proposes to her. He asks her to marry him if he wins the fight but she proposes he pays the bills if he loses. Porco is against the idea but the pirates shut him up. Curtis looks at all the bills and finds it rather expensive but, at the pirate's prodding, accepts the challenge. The pirates leave and Porco thanks Fio for giving him a chance to fight Curtis.

Later that night: As Fio is falling asleep, she watches Porco check his ammo, when she has a vision of Porco as a human (and he looks handsome!). Startled, she asks him why he became a pig. Porco recounts his last battle of World War I, when he lost his friend Belneldi (Gina's first husband) and had his vision of the aviator's paradise, where he was not accepted. Since his friend had just been married with Gina, Marco offered himself instead of his friend, but he was sent back to earth, cursed to live as a pig. As he finishes his story,





Fio tells him it would been right for him to die because he is a good guy. Porco answers that all the good guys are already dead and tells her to go to sleep. Fio gives him a kiss on the cheek and goes to sleep.

At the race: Porco disapproves of the fact that the pirates made the fight a festival and signals the fact that everybody there are disreputable individuals. There is a huge crowd and Curtis is happy about his new-found fame. The boss of the Mamma Aiuto states the rules (there are no rules) and both of them give their bids (Curtis, a lot of money and Porco, Fio). Curtis is so sure of his winning that he tells Fio to wait for him at the church. The two planes take off and the crowd goes wild. At first, Curtis seems to have the advantage, but Porco turns the tables on him and prepares to fire, using all of his skills to keep Curtis in his sights.

At the Hotel Adriano: Gina's pilot complains that they will miss the fight if she does not hurry. Meanwhile, Gina is on her radio, and receives a message from Major Fierrari, who tells her that the Italian Air Force knows about the fight and will try to bag everybody at the same time. Gina jumps into the plane and tells the pilot to hurry.

At the fight: Porco vows not to give Fio to a man like Curtis and thumbs his trigger. And his machinegun jams. Curtis is overjoyed by such luck and pulls his own trigger. Ooops! Jammed too!

Porco is laughing his head off when he sees Curtis grab his six-shooter and fire. He calls him a moron, because he will never be able to hit him, when a bullet hits a few centimeters from his head. Curtis empties his gun and starts to reload, when Porco grabs a piece of metal inside his own cockpit and throws it at him. Curtis laughs saying that the piece will never reach him. Clang! It takes Curtis a few seconds to recover and find something to throw at Porco. The two pilots exchange different parts of their planes, until they have nothing left to throw. They then land and start a fist fight, exchanging sweet and polite comments about each other (like fat pig, chicken cowboy, etc.) as well as a volley of punches that would take anybody else's head off! At one time, Curtis menaces Porco that he will make prosciutto out of him. Porco knocks him down. Everybody on the island bets like crazy. After a few rounds, both adversaries are in a terrible state. Curtis tells Porco that he must choose between Gina and Fio, that he can't have both. "Gina loves you, stupid pig! She's been waiting for you for years!" Meanwhile, Gina arrives near the island and is relieved to see that the Italian Air Force has not arrived. Back in the water, Porco hollers to Curtis that he is a liar and a cheat to use such words to break his resolve. Curtis protests that he is not telling a lie but Porco is adamant, he will not leave Fio to Curtis. Both of them strike a telling blow and sink underwater, unconscious. Gina fires flares, circles the island and lands near the two adversaries. The pirate referee counts and is at eight, when Gina looks into the water and gently talks to Porco. "Do you want another girl to be unhappy?" Porco wakes up and wins the fight, saving Fio from marrying Curtis and her grand-father's shop from bankruptcy at the same time. Porco takes Fio in his arms, walks to Gina's plane and stuffs her into the cockpit. Of course, she protests loudly but cannot really do anything. As Gina's plane takes off, Fio lands a kiss on Porco's mouth and the two contestants are left standing in the water. Porco asks Curtis if he wants to help him lead the Air Force astray. Curtis turns to answer but sees something. "Your face!" Porco turns away and starts walking to his plane. "Hey, wait! Your face!" Porco continues to walk. "Isn't your plane over there?" Curtis follows him as the image fades...

At the end of the movie, Fio recounts that she never saw Porco again, but has become a very good friend of Gina's. Curtis still writes to her sometimes. Although he hasn't become president yet, he is a famous actor. The last phrase is "it's our secret that Gina won her gamble".

This synopsis was made with the help of the script translated by Koji Ono.

PORCO ROSSO TECHNOLOGY

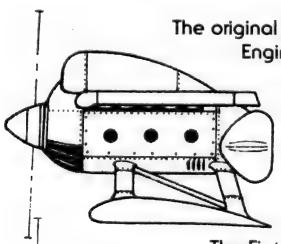
by Martin Ouellette

Since the story of Porco Rosso happens in the late 1920s/early 1930s, we cannot expect incredible technological marvels. Contrarily to his usual way of using technology in an unrelated setting (like the microwaves and televisions in the 1930s setting of Kiki's Delivery Service), Miyazaki decided to be faithful to the atmosphere of the period. Everything we see in the movie is an exact reproduction of the real object. This is particularly true when it concerns the vehicles (especially the planes). Here are details on some of the most "realistic" stuff we saw in the movie.

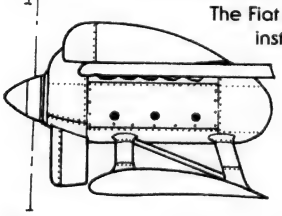
The Planes

As always with Miyazaki's animations, planes (or anything that flies) are always drawn in great detail and Porco Rosso's planes are no exception. Usually, Miyazaki designs are weird looking contraptions, which are very hard to find realistic (Laputa, Castle in the Sky is a great example of Miyazaki's imagination with everything that flies). It is not so in Porco Rosso. Porco's plane, a Savoia S-21 Folgore, was done including the most minute details, including exact reproductions of the cockpit instruments and the engine, an Isotta Fraschini rendered in exquisite detail (when Master Piccolo shows Porco the new engine for his Folgore, look carefully at what is written on the valve cover. It is written "Ghibli", as in Miyazaki's studio). The re-design, rebuild and parts fabrication of the planes (all supervised by Fio, Piccolo's grand-daughter) are a masterpiece of technical knowledge on Miyazaki's part. It also shows very well the atmosphere that surrounded plane making in the 1920s, a job that combined artistry, patience and a whole lot of knowledge and imagination (these days, aircraft design is a little less satisfying for the people who do it) akin to the attitude that was displayed by Renaissance artists such as Leonardo da Vinci and Michael Angelo.

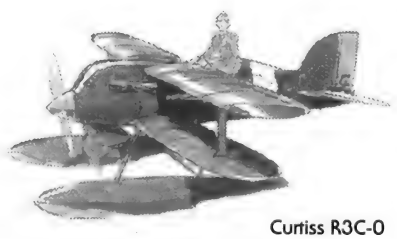
Cutawat of Porco's S-21



The original Isotta Fraschini Engine on the S-21



The Fiat Folgore AS.21 installed after the redesign



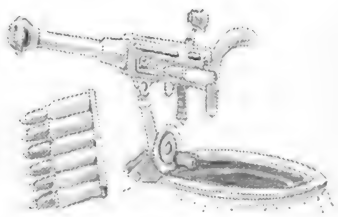
Curtiss R3C-0

Other incredibly detailed planes are Curtis' Curtiss R3C-0 fighter and Porco's old World War I plane, Macchi M-5. At one moment, we also see a Macchi M-67 float plane fighter, which was probably the most powerful plane of its era. As far as we could see, the Dabohaze flying boat used by the Mamma Aiuto pirate team is the only plane we could not find in any book, although we believe it was strongly inspired by a German design, probably one of the numerous Dornier float planes in service during "the roaring 20s". By the way, both Porco's and Curtis' planes are racers subsequently modified with armament.

The Dabohaze, a modified Dornier flying boat

The Weapons

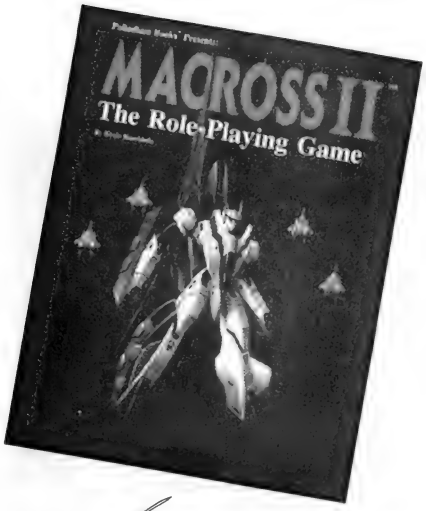
By weapons, we mean the machineguns mounted on the planes. The Folgore's machineguns are very probably made by Breda, an Italian company which specialized in machinegun fabrication. The ones on Curtis' plane seem to be air-cooled Vickers, which should, technically, not be there, for the plane is actually a racer. The machineguns mounted on the Mamma Aiuto's flying boat seem to be Breda machineguns (at least for the rear turret) but we also see a Lewis and a 37mm cannon (probably a Breda as well. It reminds us of one, anyway) which is often hand wielded by the boss of the Mamma Aiuto gang. Of course, to add realism to the movie, when the guns are fired, a stream of spent cartridges follow the planes, a detail that is often forgotten in lesser quality animations.



Here are some books that you could find interesting if you are both a plane and a Miyazaki fan:

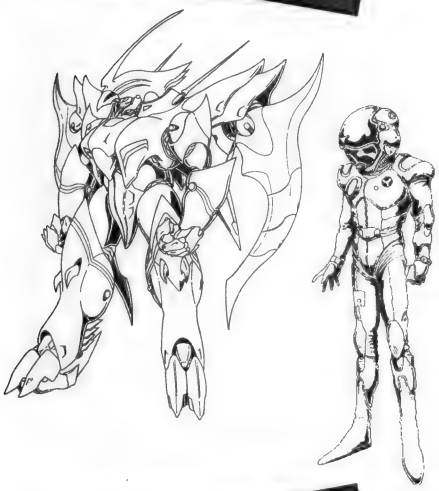
The first one is a model book, containing drawings (both technical and artistic) and photos of planes from the movie. It also shows planes in some of the museums Miyazaki visited. There are also models from the movie (which are not available, sadly). It also contains the original Porco Rosso comic as published in "Model Gaphix". 64 pages, nearly all in color. A must for aviation buffs.

The second book is the "Hayao Miyazaki Daydream Data Notes". This book is truly a dream come true for all Miyazaki fanatics. It contains all kinds of comic strips on planes, tanks and warships, as well as anything Miyazaki found worthy of including (a lot of weird stuff). This book is all in color (with Miyazaki's watercolors, its a delight for the eyes) and has 112 pages. A bit costly (and rare) but if you can find it, buy it! It's worth every cent...



PALLADIUM GAMES' MACROSS II

by Marc-Alex Vézina



Macross II™: The Role-Playing Game

Palladium Books seems to have an uncanny ability in acquiring some of the most interesting licenses on the market. After the widely successful role-playing adaptation of the now famous Robotech TV series, Palladium offers an adaptation of the sequel to one of the Japanese series that helped build the Robotech saga: Super Dimensional Fortress Macross.

Although it was feverously awaited, Macross II: Do You Remember Love? did not touch the heart of Japanese fans as much as its predecessor. It was, however, a big success in North America where it was distributed in subtitled, dubbed, and comic format.

The book itself is 112 pages long. One could have done without the publicity for the animated series that is in the introduction, but its presence is quite understandable. It also helps clear the confusion between Macross and Robotech.

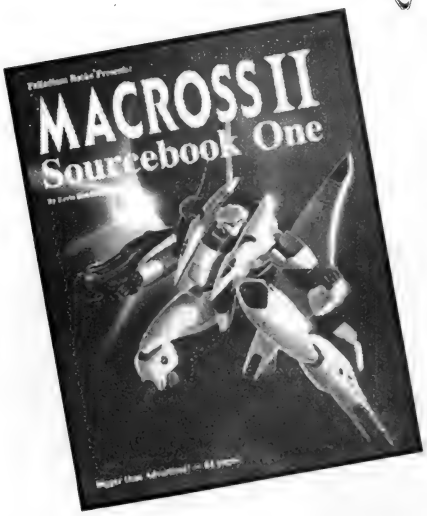
The first forty pages or so repeat the standard Palladium role-playing system; all the rules needed to play are found there. The next thirty pages introduce the equipment of the UN Spacy and the mecha themselves. Even Silvie's car and Hibiki's motorcycle are included in the equipment section. A listing of the Mardukes' vehicles and mecha follow. As usual, compromises had to be made between faithfulness to the original animation and playability: some of the damage capacities seem overestimated.

Specific Macross II Occupational Character Classes are included along with attribute requirements and skills. One can even play a Marduke character since many O.C.C. are given for them.

The last section is a rather short overview of the story's background. It includes statistics for four major Macross II characters: Hibiki, Silvie, Ishtar and Feff.

All in all, the book is a nice source of information for fans of Macross II.

Macross II™: The Role-Playing Game, written by Kevin Siembieda, 112 pages, published by Palladium Books.



Macross II™ Sourcebook One

This sourcebook is intended to complement the basic Macross II™ rulebook by introducing new material and mecha to be used by and against the players. Amusing note: in the introduction, the author advises not to use these designs as they are in non-Macross campaigns since they are too powerful!

The main focus of the sourcebook is placed on the UN Spacy's ground forces and ships. The new Destroids are presented in lavish detail. The ships are only briefly examined: no floor plans are provided. Complete stats are provided for the Metal Siren, Earth's new transformable robot.

A very useful breakdown of the forces of the UN Spacy is included, along with explanations on the role of Zentran and Meltran soldiers in the Spacy.

The final part of the book provides additional background material on the Marduke invaders. It includes a new transformable Marduke battle armor and additional O.C.C. for Marduke players.

Macross II™ Sourcebook One, written by Kevin Siembieda, 64 pages, published by Palladium Books.

Artwork
© Palladium Books Inc.

HOW TO ACCESS NEW SOURCES OF ANIME & MUSIC

by James Standen Taylor
Japanese Animation Club of Toronto

Most Western Otaku of Japanese pop culture have few sources other than comic stores and mail-order companies. There are, however, two other sources: branch stores of major music chains and the shops in larger Chinese communities.

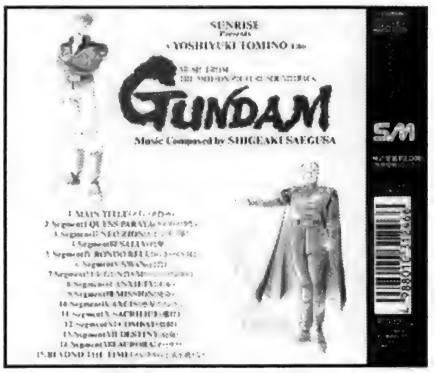
If you have already tried these and turned away frustrated, try again, but this time use the information in this article. Approaching these sources incorrectly is a fast dead end. We will show you why this often happens and how to navigate the road blocks.

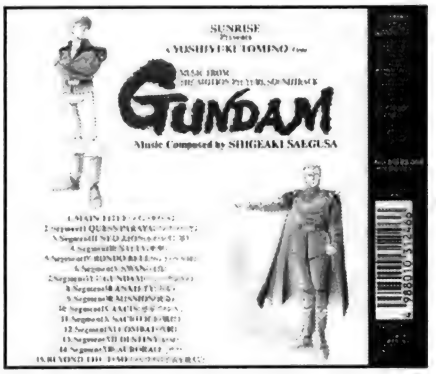
Starting with English sources, your local music store doesn't have access to Japan, but their head office does. Some branch employees may not realize this, but the major chains do have international marketing personnel. The trick is getting to them.

Face it: the type of order you want to make is unusual and these stores are making lots of money without it. Domestic orders are easy, but you want to go international — not to some easy place like Europe, but to Japan; a hard market. Its suppliers are rarely dealt with. They often have to mess with a weird foreign language in unfamiliar catalogues, looking for things they've never heard of before. You will often be told that they can't locate what you want, but that is due to their inexperience. You need to help them.

Here's what to do. Start with a proper attitude by stepping into the clerk's shoes and seeing this as a new experience. They are used to dealing with Aerosmith, not Bubblegum Crisis or Chage & Aska. They often don't even know where to start looking, unless you have run into a fortunate exception, but we will assume the worst case scenario here.

Don't make them do your homework. The easier it is for them to process your order, the more likely it will succeed. Walking in and asking for them to get this band or that soundtrack is not the way to do it. You need to root out the ordering information and insure its accuracy. Any snag will stop the processing of the order, as they won't risk importing something across the Pacific if it might be the wrong item. Correct information is the key, whether ordering CD or LD. Most large chains are now hooked into LD distribution, even having some Japanese material in stock at their flagship stores. Having the correct title and/or artist name may seem obvious, but remember that the original product is in Japanese script and there may be more than one way to translate that into English. Include not only the proper English spelling, but any variants you have found along with the catalogue names and page numbers you saw them in. The more information the better, as you don't know what catalogues the head office uses to create orders. If you can, include the information in Japanese. It may not do a lot in North America, but it could be the one thing that unknots any confusion on the Japanese end. Copy it onto the order form yourself. If you can't recognize the names of your favourite material in Japanese you are operating at a disadvantage whenever you pick up a source printed in Japanese.

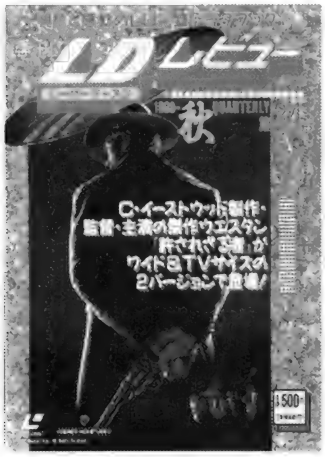




Despite appearances, these are two different products. The top one is the Hong Kong version; the bottom is the Japanese original. The giveaway is in the end pieces. Note the copyright information and order numbers. You will get the same music on both, but the Chinese version lacks photo quality, special CD paint and the entire photo book of the Japanese version.

A Chinese audio cassette compiling the best songs from Hayao Miyazaki`s movies. There is not much difference with a similar Japanese cassette save for the price.

Konbakutodeisaku CD General Catalogue (above) and some equivalent for LDs (below).



Most crucial is a correct product number. Many CDs and LDs come in various formats, especially soundtracks. Which do you want: the vocal, instrumental, karaoke, remix special, best of collection, perfect memory, a specific episode, narration disc, etc. ? The mutations go on forever. Here's an overlooked error that has scuttled many orders: what is the national source of the product number? It is useless to ask a store to order something from Japan when you have given them a product number from a reprint company in Hong Kong or Taiwan. Be careful not to confuse CD and LD numbers. Provide full publisher's information; even the date of issue if possible. Watch out for subsidiary companies: include the name of their parent companies. It's like using a route directory to travel the path to a specific program on your computer: the clearer a path, the better. Stores you deal with are going into rarely travelled waters and anything that makes them pause will almost always make them stop. That is why, when they send your order into the international order desk at the head store, you may want to make sure they include your phone number with it and the instructions that they can call you direct, even collect, to clarify any problems. This will speed things up, prevent your order from slipping onto the back-burner, can bump you over silly road-blocks, and shows you're serious. If you're a professional hunter of Japanese music and anime, then go in with all the information you need to nail your prey to the wall. It shows when you've done your homework. You can save a step by going to the flagship store, if it's in your city, and talking direct to the proper people. Even if they don't order Japanese material regularly, they know the catalogues.

Once the order is in, be prepared to wait up to three months. There is a long paperwork journey and the item has to return through the same route. Find out when the orders to Japan are made and time your requests accordingly, as they often order only a few times a year. Be patient and don't hassle them. They honestly don't know when your order will arrive and have no easy way to find out. You've gone through all this work to convince them that it's easy to order from Japan, so don't ruin it by being a pain. You will want to use them again, or have to reorder if the item was out of stock (this is because many companies don't leave backorders to pile up in Japan), so you want them disposed favourably towards you. Finally, watch exchange rates and be ready to pay some stiff prices when the Yen is strong and the dollar weak.

By now you should want to know about the catalogues I've been talking about. There are a number floating around with some Japanese information in them, but there are two you should consider Scripture. The one most of you will be limited to using is called the C.D.I.: "The Compact Disc International Catalogue". Every major music store should have one. They are probably only familiar with using it for European imports, but over toward the right side of each page is a column for Japanese products. There are two sections: one for artists and the other for soundtracks. The products are listed alphabetically by title regardless of nation of origin, and it's all in English. The number of Japanese rock artists and anime soundtracks covered is extensive, but the depth of coverage varies year to year, sometimes drastically, and their translations of Japanese names into English can be atrocious. If you're serious, you should buy one.

The second, far superior, catalogue needs some acquaintance with Japanese print or a kanji guide. It is the literally two-inch thick "CD General Catalogue" put out quarterly by the Konbakutodeisaku Group. It lists every anime CD and Japanese artist in print. A sister catalogue handles LD. You can even subscribe to a release magazine that keeps you updated on new CDs and LDs. If you don't know how to use a kanji guide and how to get around in kana, these catalogues are a damn good reason to learn. You will not be sorry. If there's interest, we'll do a basic article on the topic.

Besides big-name stores, many CD/LD specialty shops are handling fringe ma-

terial. They may not have it in stock, but it's often a matter of status among these independants as to what they can ferret out. Many are big on talk and slow on show, so let me tell you about one who comes through: "The CD Bar" in Toronto, Canada; phone (416) 977-6863. This is an underground CD/LD specialty store with an edge: a monthly order to Japan direct into a major CD/LD supplier's warehouse, that distributes for the entire American market. Fulfilment rate averages 80% in the first month with the remainder mostly within two months. They are already servicing people by phone from all across the continent. If it's in print in Japan and you can give them the ordering information they can get it; both CD and LD anime and artists. You need to supply the information as they use this source for getting Japanese versions of CD's by Western artists, so their knowledge of actual Japanese artists and anime is skimpy, but that's a small price to pay to get at a Japanese supplier. They can also sell you copies of both the "C.D.I." and the "CD General Catalogue".

Now, you can pick up some anime (AKIRA, LENSMEN, etc.) and some Japanese artists (Nokko, Shonen Knife, Loudness, Yellow Magic Orchestra) in mainstream stores, but if you want to find some real treasures go explore the nearest Chinese community. Since Japanese animation and singers are huge in Hong Kong, they are imported by Chinese stores in North America to serve the demands of their public. The approching takeover of Hong Kong by Mainland China is sending more Chinese people to the West and their entertainment tastes are flooding Chinese stores with a rising tide of Japanese products.

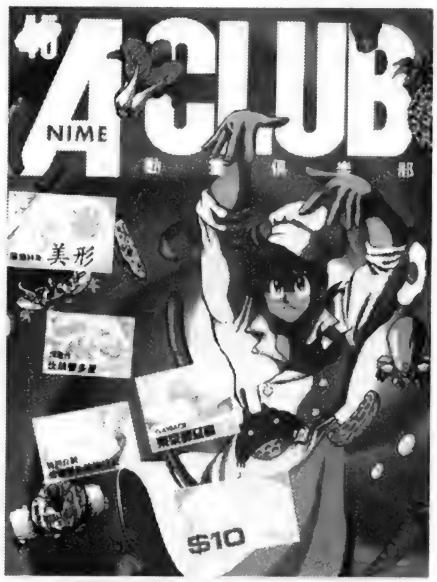
Anime is easy to find. There are scores of stores ready to rent you CDs, LDs, comics and video games. Some will import material for you once they know you as an established customer. The anime is usually in Japanese with Chinese subtitles which can be anywhere from reasonaby sized to huge. Stay away from street vendors selling videos. They are usually poor quality bootlegs. There is a multi-volume series available to stores covering all the major works of anime. Each volume is about $30 Canadian and comes in a crash case. On longer pieces it isn't a deal as they split the footage across two volumes. The series is over 300 volumes, so most stores carry a small selection, but there is a catalogue which pictures the available tapes.

Soundtracks and rock artists are usually kept together in their own section. Due to their high price-point, they are often kept behind the cash desk or in closed displays with only their spines out, so if you don't see Japanese products don't assume it's not there. There is a large series of soundtracks available with a photocatalogue. These catalogues are flip-style and usually posted on a wall or the display unit. There are over 200 available titles. There is also a music video series put out by MTV Asia that focuses exclusively on Japanese artists. It's up to about 60 volumes, but its catalogue is in Japanese without photos. There are the volume numbers for the singers I covered in my article on Japanese Rock Music (PA #21): Chisato: 32; Miho: 18, 33; Shizuka: 3, 15, 37, 41; Akina: 11; Seiko: 4, 35; Yoko: 46. Princess is too hard for the series. As most of the music stores double as magazine shops you can find print sources for both anime and music, A-CLUB and MYOJO, respectively; sometimes others. Remember that there are differences between Japanese and Hong Kong printings of the same items. In the Hong Kong versions packaging artwork is often not as sharply reproduced, and extras from the Japanese version, like artist mini-photo books, stickers, posters, CD paint, etc., are often either not included or are pared down in quantity.

What short-circuits your shopping here? Some things are special to the situation, but many are the same as when dealing with English stores.

Two of the special things are that you are not a regular customer and may not be Oriental, so your being there may be unusual. While tourist-marketed stores are used to it, there are not many non-Orientals who go into Chinese stores that handle language-specialized products. Many think you have wandered in by mistake, but once they see you inspect-

A part of the poster-size catalogue of the main Chinese anime distributor. This series, offering over 300 titles, can be found in most Chinese stores already carrying anime products (above).



MY NEIGHBOR TOTORO soundtrack CD from the Chinese reprint series. Note that this scene is NOT in the movie. Both sisters are present in the movie, not just Mai.

IANUS PUBLICATIONS WISH YOU

1994

All the staff of

the best for

1st row: Pierre Ouellette, Claude J. Pelletier, Ghislain Barbe, 2nd row: Ben Miller, Jeff Fortier, Totoro, Robert Dubois
3rd row: Dominique Durocher, Jimmy Mah, Marc-Alexandre Vézina, Jean Carrières, Martin Ouellette

STAR RIDERS

WELCOME TO THE JOYRIDE!

STAR RIDERS is a wacky science-fiction role-playing game. It is complete with rules, equipment and character stats. Star Riders is also compatible with the *Teenagers From Outer Space* role-playing game from R. Talsorian Games Inc.

Written by Hans Guévin
96 pages, Prod #SR-01, $14.95
From Ianus Publications

IANUS GAMES

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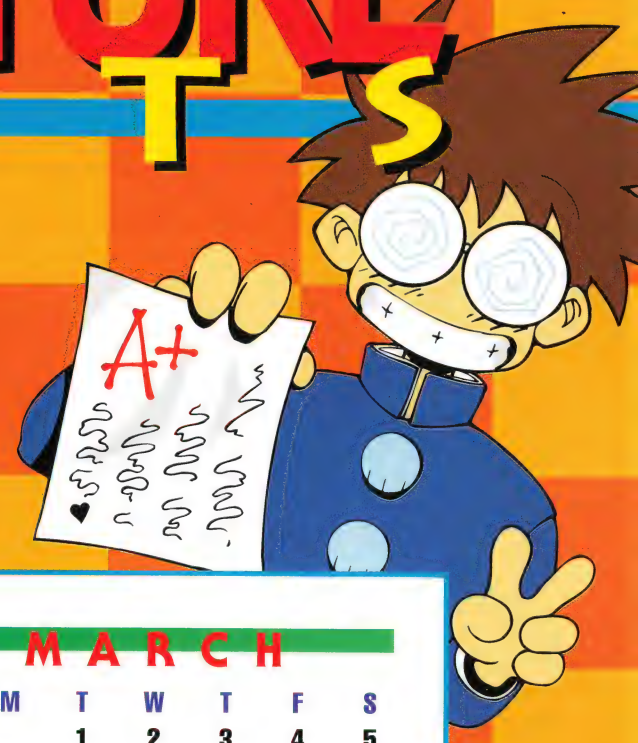

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1994

THE ANIME & MANGA MAGAZINE

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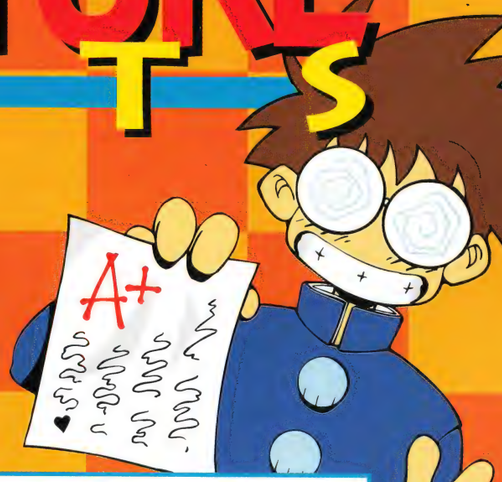

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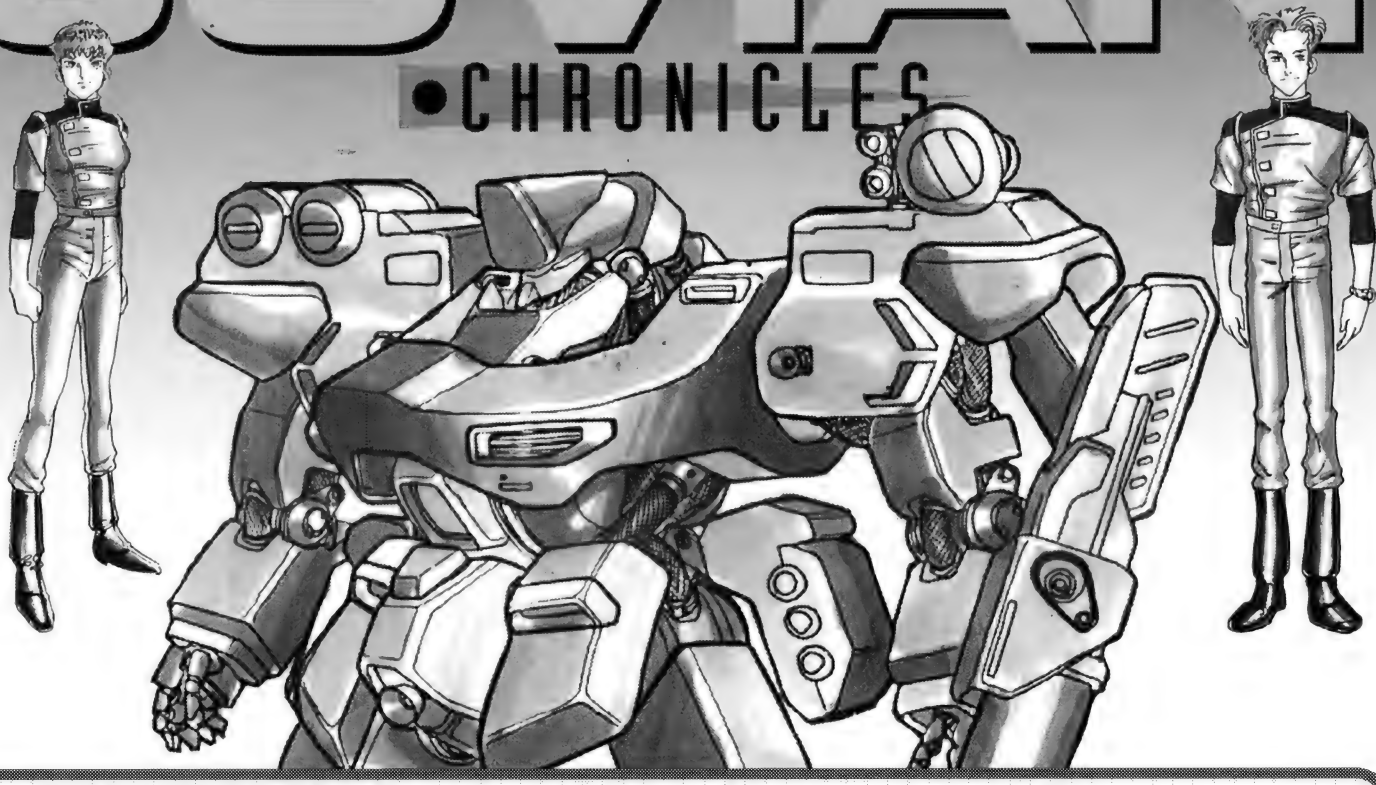
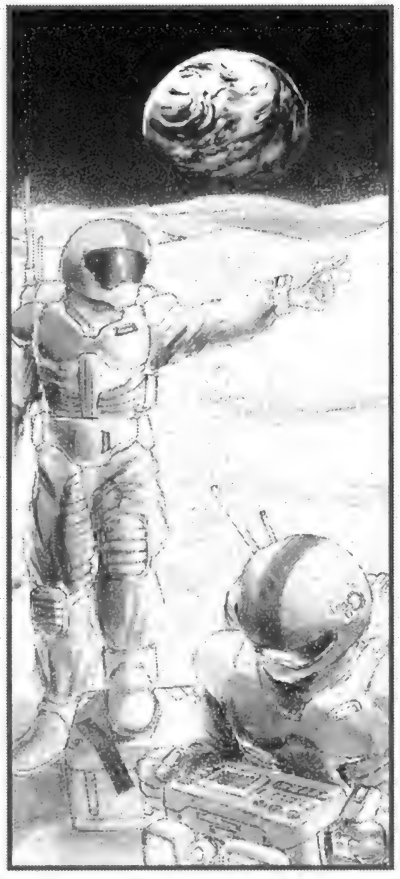
1994

THE ANIME & MANGA MAGAZINE

JOVIAN
•CHRONICLES





BE PART OF THE ADVENTURE

The Jovian Chronicles is a new universe sourcebook for the acclaimed Mekton II role-playing game. Greatly inspired by Japanese science-fiction animation, it is the first in a line of modules and sourcebooks that will take you beyond the confines of planet Earth to discover a solar system on the brink of war. Along the way, the players will interact with a rich cast of characters and possibly alter forever the destiny of the Jovian Confederation, if not the human race!

Written by Marc-Alexandre Vézina

112 pages, Prod# IMP-01, $15.95 US/Can.

From Ianus Publications, Inc.

IANUS GAMES

A Chinese mook of Nausicäa (above). The Japanese and Chinese VGA manga (below).

ing the product, especially if you know what you're doing, a sales-person will come to help. Until you become established as a regular patron, however, don't expect much inside-track advantages or above regular help. In the beginning, you're a novelty. Don't miss any opportunities to change that status. Talk with the staff and explain your interest; why you're there. I find staff to be surprised that I know the Asian artists and anime, and more willing to help once they know I appreciate something they also like. It pushes you through the door from being a "lost tourist" to being a potential customer who might be back. It's the first step down the road to developing friendships with the staff that will make you a recognized face and put you on the inside track that builds up as you frequent the store. Personal contact goes a lot further than merely plunking down your money when dealing with most Oriental stores, though regular purchases certainly don't hurt!

As with English stores, do your homework and have your facts straight. It shows when you know what you're talking about and is a great aid to the staff. Many stores put products out in a general order, so bring anything that will help identify what you want. As many items have no English on them, a kanji guide, or a list in Japanese of what you want, can be crucial. There is, however, an increasing movement toward having English on at least one spine, and having the name in English is a vogue thing for many artists. If you have a photo of the anime character or singer you are after, it can be a great help. Remember, in these stores you are crossing three language barriers: English into Chinese into Japanese. It can get confusing. Knowing only the Japanese pronunciation is usually no help at all.

For example, if you're into MACROSS and like the songs done by Minmay, you may want one of the voice actress' many solo albums. Her name is Mari Iijima and her CDs are carried by most Chinese music stores, but if you walk in and ask for a CD by Mari Iijima, they will not know who you are talking about, even though there could be a whole shelf of her stuff in plain view. This is because her name, as well as those of any Japanese artist and that of many anime titles, use the same characters in both Japanese and Chinese, but are pronounced with radical differences. They know Mari Iijima as Fun Do Tsung Lai. The artists from my Japanese Rock Music article (cf. PA #21) are: Thek Yae Mo Yau Tse (Yoko), Sung Sa May Souy (Miho), Sum Go Tse Lay (Chisato), Gung Tang Sing Hau (Shizuka), Chung Ting Tseng Ge (Seiko), Chong Sum Ming Choy (Akina). Mari Hamada, who's in the Lee Aaron/Alannah Myles vein, is Bun Ting Ma Lai. Most major anime pieces are easy to identify, but others can be almost impossible without a photo. Are you beginning to see why you often can't find what you want? Items with English names, like Princess, don't usually change, though knowing katakana is a great help.

What you will find will be what is hot in Hong Kong, not Japan, though it can coincide. Since Hong Kong's material is over spill from Japan, and what is here is overspill from Hong Kong, selection can be uneven and between six-months and a year behind. Special orders are usually a waste of time as they are blind shots. You need to dig around, anyway, as prices and selection of Japanese items vary between almost yen price to almost 300% markup between stores. The phrases "shop around" and "buyer beware" are never more advisable. While street vendors are not a good source of video, you can often find Japanese CDs at bargain prices at their tables. Also, don't stick to what is obvious. Look into everything, especially stationery, specialty, and toy stores. You will find Japanese singers and anime characters on everything.

If you find a Japanese food store you have also found a source for both magazines and rental videos. Here in Canada there is a standardized video system they seem to use. Anime is titled in hiragana on a red label, and pop music on a navy blue label. The light blue labels are traditional music (enka).

Being a well-mannered, informed, accurate, and consistent customer at Asian stores pays off. Be friendly and talk, without disrupting business. As you build up rapport with those on your regular route your face will become known and personal interest develops because you're interested in something they like, but feel is neglected by Western society. Your business will be responded to and genuinely appreciated. At my favourite Chinese music store the whole staff knows me and a salesperson is quick to show up at my side to point out new products. And it's not just random suggestions; they've kept track of what I like, often phoning me when new items by my favourites arrive from Hong Kong. Regular customers get special treatment on an inside track that makes new products available before they even hit the shelf. This sort of first pick privilege, and others, comes from lots of time and honest friendship, however; it took me almost three years, but it is possible. On the other side of the scales, I know of a Japanese video store that dislikes dealing with Westerners because of the badgering they took from anime otaku a few years ago. It takes balance and networking to pull things together and get into the right channels, not banging around in an irregular manner in another's culture.

In conclusion, remember that in both English and Chinese cases you are doing something new, so be prepared beforehand, go in informed about what you want, but be ready to take time and be patient. The way you handle yourself reflects on more than just you. It can open or shut the door for all other otaku in your area.

For those of you who want to try Japanese music, but are afraid of getting the wrong artist by mistake, the following chart can be taken into the store. Just point at the characters of the artist you want. Accompaning are Japanese name, Chinese pronunciation, and musical style:

森高千里 ..... Chisato Moritaka, Sum Go Tse Lay, pop/dance

工藤静香 ..... Shizuka Kudo, Gung Tang Sing Hau, rock/dance

松田聖子 ..... Seiko Matsuda, Chung Ting Tseng Ge, pop

中山美穂 ..... Miho Nakayama, Sung Sa May Souy, pop

荻里目洋子 ..... Yoko Oginome, Thek Yae Mo Yau Tse, pop/dance

浜田麻里 ..... Mari Hamada, Bun Ting Ma Lai, rock/hard rock

中森明菜 ..... Akina Nakamori, Chong Sum Ming Choy, pop

貧反島真理 ..... Mari Lijima, Fun Do Tsung Lai, pop/rock

プリンセス² ..... Princess, Princess, rock/pop/hard rock

NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER:

My own experience has shown me that what James described is quite true. For my part, I prefer to deal with mail-order companies in California like Nikaku Animart. I can find there all the CDs and LDs I need, but I have also found that it is also nice to be able to find stuff closer, which is sometimes at a better price. I have never tried to order from local music stores, but Montreal's Chinatown offers a lot. I've found video games, magazines (A-Club, Family Comics), manga (unfortunately in Chinese), LDs, CDs, and video to rent or buy. Some places can even order for us, and the prices are generally cheaper than if I had ordered from the US (a CD is $28 Can instead of $35 US). If you are in the Montreal area, the best place in Chinatown is a book store at 1112 A St-Laurent Blvd., tel: (514) 954-1112. Unfortunately, the Chinese connection will not work everywhere. You need a major Chinese community in your vicinity, and this is more likely in big cities or on the west coast.

Nevertheless, this is very useful information. As James said, those who have "been around the field for a while may know a lot of this. So do we, but we found that most newcomers, and even many who had been around for a while, had not realized a great deal of what is included in this article. In fact, a lot of what we took for granted had never crossed their mind!". You will probably be pleased to learn that this article is only the first of a series. "Anime World" will bring you more knowledge on the Japanese pop culture throughout the year. Next: "Explaining Minmei: The Allure of the Idol Singer".

CJP

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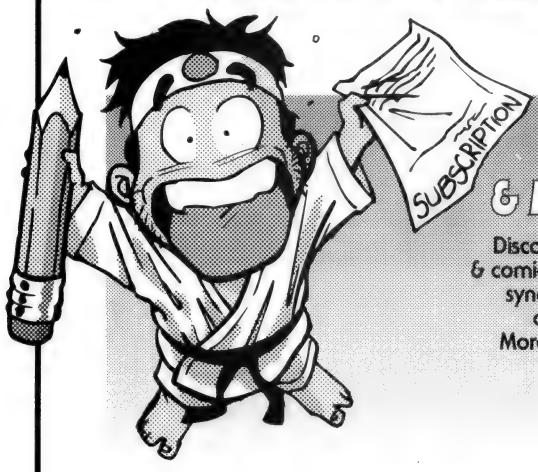

THE ANIME & MANGA MAGAZINE

Discover the world of Japanese animation & comics through interviews with their creators, synopses, reviews of the latest releases, and news on upcoming products. More pages! More anime! More pictures!

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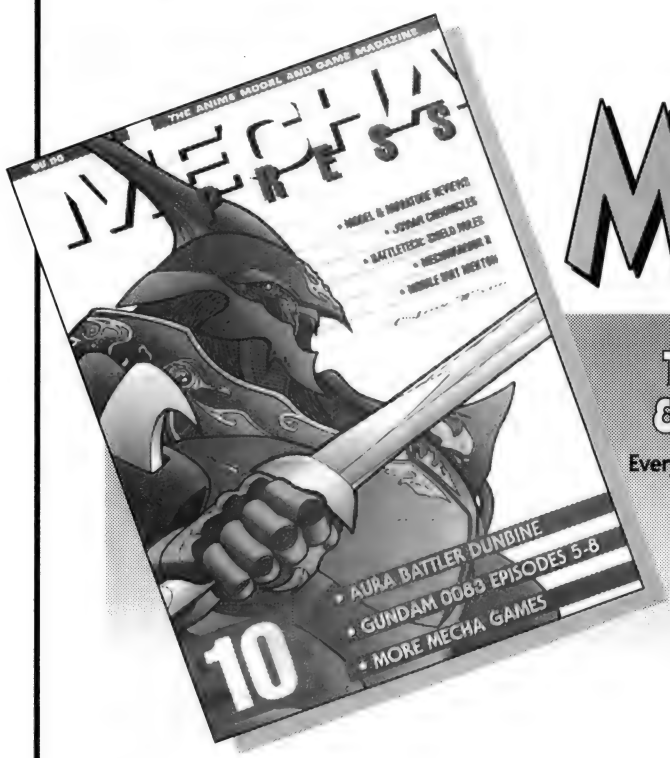

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Everything you need to know about mecha: how to use them in gaming, how to enjoy them in modeling, and full details on their original animations. Now with more pages!

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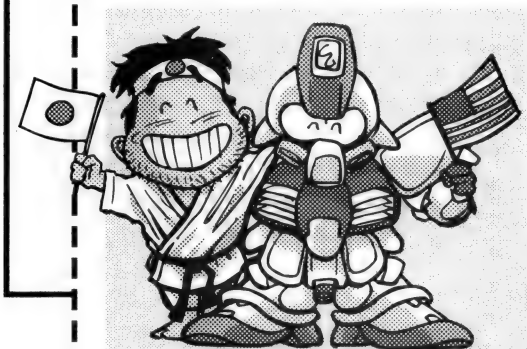

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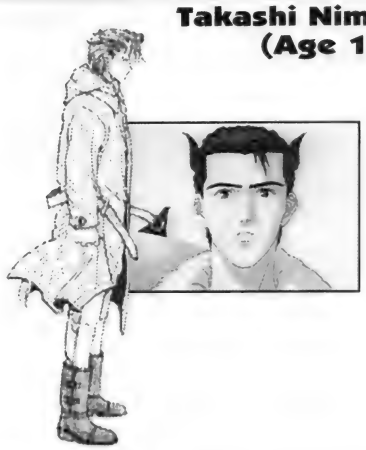
VIDEO GIRL AI CHARACTERS

by François Vézina

Yota Moteuchi (Age 16)

The hero of the story. He lives in a big house that his father bought after the death of Yota's mother ten years ago. Alone most of his life, Yota manages to organize his life with the help of teen magazines, which he consults when dealing with any situation. He really is unpopular with girls, and that's the meaning of his name: "unpopular with girls". He is deeply in love with Moemi but she loves someone else. However, he has a real friendship with her even though he wants it to be more than that. He also is the "owner" of Ai Amano's video tape.

Takashi Nimai (Age 16)



A young teen idol and personal friend of Yota. He doesn't like girls because he just wants to be left alone, but his great looks and good music make him exceedingly popular among teenage girls. He also wants to help Yota win over Moemi's heart.

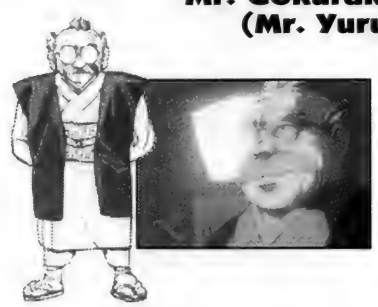
Moemi Hayakawa (Age 16)

A longtime friend of Yota and Takashi. She likes Yota as if he was a brother and she is deeply in love with Takashi.

Ai Amano (Age 16)

Created by Kora, she is a Video Girl. Video Girls have the ability to come to life and are supposed to be the perfect love doll attuned to the possessor of the Video Tape they were recorded on. However, Yota played her Video Tape on a broken VCR and she became defective. From being a love doll, she's suddenly able to establish a true friendship with Yota and fell in love with him. The only catch is that she has a one month life span.

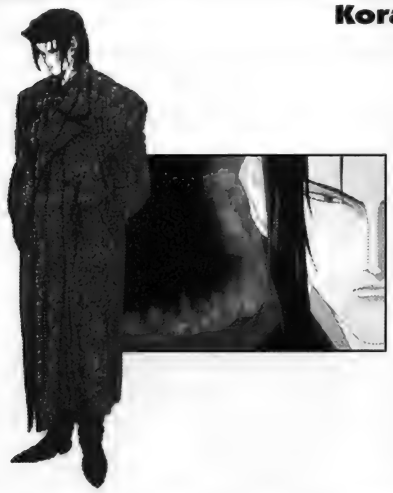
Mr. Gokuraku (Mr. Yuru)



Owner of the Video Shop Gokuraku (Paradise). He exists in another dimension. If he finds someone with a pure heart who is in pain, he invites him in the Video Shop and gives him a Video Girl tape. This has supposedly happened only two times before. Even though he is not the most powerful of his dimension, he is the one who operates the electronic stuff.

Video-Girl-Ai

Kora



He is the Big Boss of the Video Dimension known as "the man with the cloak". He created and programmed the Video Girls. While not really evil, he is rather radical when time comes to make a decision. Humans are only there to be toyed with and he often uses them as guinea-pigs to test a theory or to achieve his goals.

Additionnal Manga characters:

Takao Sarayama

He appears in chapter 11. His hobby is painting; he especially likes to paint nude girls. He manages to get a date with Ai, but all he really wants to do is bring her to his appartment to do a little painting.

Nobuko Nizaki

She appears in chapter 21. She is in the same class as Yota and has a crush on him. She uses the fact that Ai doesn't remember Yota to get closer to him. She even invites herself to his home to pass the night. Even though her motives are good, she is a little pushy and puts Yota in an embarrassing position with Ai. After leaving Yota, she takes care of Naoto after his "accident".

Mai Kamio

She appears in chapter 36. Like Ai, she is a Video Girl. Kora created her to erase Ai because he can't do it by himself. Although Naoto brought her to the real world, she isn't bound to him because Kora "erased" Naoto's memory of the event and repossessed the videotape. Since she doesn't have a master, she wants to get Yota by destroying Ai.

Naoto Matsui

He appears in chapter 33. He secretly loves Nobuko but is too shy to tell her. He is also the one who played Video Mai's video, but Kora erased his memory of the event. Because Kora used a special way to erase his memory, he's in an hospital bed for the rest of the manga.

Natsumi

She appears in chapter 47. She is a girl Yota encountered in a park when they were young. She ran away from her boyfriend, Koji Shimizu. After saving Yota from some street punk, she asks him if she could stay at his home. She erects her tent in the backyard before Yota has time to reply.. She always wears a baseball cap and has a real tomboy attitude. However, she suffers from a heart problem that will put her in an hospital later in the manga.

VIDEO GIRL AI: THE OVA'S

by François Vézina

Originally published in Shonen Jump in late '80 early '90 , VIDEO GIRL AI is one of the most popular manga of its kind. It is acclaimed as one of the most soft and well drawn manga of the decade. This comic book even crossed the gender barrier; it is read and appreciated by both boys and girls. Drawn with awe-inspiring precision, writen in a Shojo way and published in a Shonen magazine helped to make this manga such an achievement. After the tremendous success of the comic book, Shueisha decided to launch a live-action movie based on the manga along with two music CDs while working on a 6-part animated series. Generally, the 6-part OVA is an adaptation of Books one, two and three (out of 13) with an alternate ending.

OVA 1:
A Soothing Girl

The story begins with a girl on a video screen. She presents herself as Ai Amano, a video girl. She also says that she understands how the viewer is feeling and that she will do her best to comfort him. Then, suddenly, she touches the screen and begins to exit from Yota's TV set. While crossing from the video world into the real world, when the VCR begins to malfunction, Ai is painfully ejected from the screen and falls unconscious on Yota's bed. Yota, unsure of what's happening, begins to look everywhere in the house for answers only to conclude that there is really a girl on his bed. He even touches her to see if she's real, and then quickly begins to read the video tape's box to figure out what's happening. Suddenly,

Ai's breasts are surrounded by lightning and they shrink in size. At the same time, she awakes and tackles Yota the same way a wrestler would do in a ring. She yells that Yota played her on a broken VCR then stops in surprise about how vulgar and tough she acts in the real world compared to the way she was on the Video World. She presents herself again and takes one of Yota's schoolbooks to see his name. As almost everyone, she calls him "Motenai", which means "unpopular with girls", instead of "Moteuchi" (same kanjis for both names). Then she throws herself at Yota and says that she is a Video Girl and that Video Girls are made as a convenience for men. Yota freaks even more when she adds that she wants to have sex with him. Yota delves into his book collection to find an article on how to make love for the first time then does a lot of silly things. Ai appears behind him telling him it was a joke and that he shouldn't get carried away but that she will show him some things she's really good at. Yota is now really confused and thinks that it's not alright and that he is supposed to be in love with Moemi. Ai takes Yota and throws him down the stairs.

Flashback: Yota is heading back home in the rain and is crying because something happened with Moemi. Then, while walking, a Videoshop appears in the middle of the road. This is the Gokuraku (paradise) Videoshop. Inside the shop, Yota looks at the shelves. His attention is drawn to a tape titled "A soothing girl - Amano Ai". The videoshop owner tells him that this is the 3rd time that someone comes in the videoshop. He gives him a card and tells him he can take the videotape with him. — End flashback.

After being thrown down the stairs, Yota asks Ai what she is supposed to be? Ai replies that she already told him and that it's because of questions like that that he isn't popular with girls. She adds that it's no wonder that Moemi dumped him and fell in love with Takashi. That remark hits Yota like a rock. He replies that it's not his fault that he's not popular with girls. He adds that if Ai is not there to comfort him, she better disappear. Ai begins to cry and says that it's because Yota played her on a broken VCR that she became more manish. She then plays another trick joke on Yota who falls for it.

Flashback: Moemi and Yota are together at the park. Moemi asks Yota to tell her who he loves and Yota replies that he will tell her only if she says afterward who she loves. Moemi then says that she loves a man very popular with girls and that it probably won't work out. — End flashback.

Ai appears and takes Yota to the dining room where is set a table full of food. Yota is amazed and begins to eat. Then he spits out all the food he took in his mouth, telling Ai that it's disgusting. Ai yells at him and tries the food. The same thing happens with her. She then loses her temper and pulls the tablecloth and the food. Yota catches a plate and decides to eat the food even though it tastes horrible. Ai is pleased with Yota's attitude and says that this is one of Yota's good points.

Flashback: Yota and Moemi at the park. Moemi says that there is a lot of competition for the guy she loves but that it doesn't scare her. Yota can only come to the conclusion that she is talking about his friend Takashi. Moemi adds that this guy doesn't even look or talk to her and asks Yota to tell her who he loves. Yota only says that Moemi shouldn't worry about it and that she should tell this guy that she loves him. — End flashback.

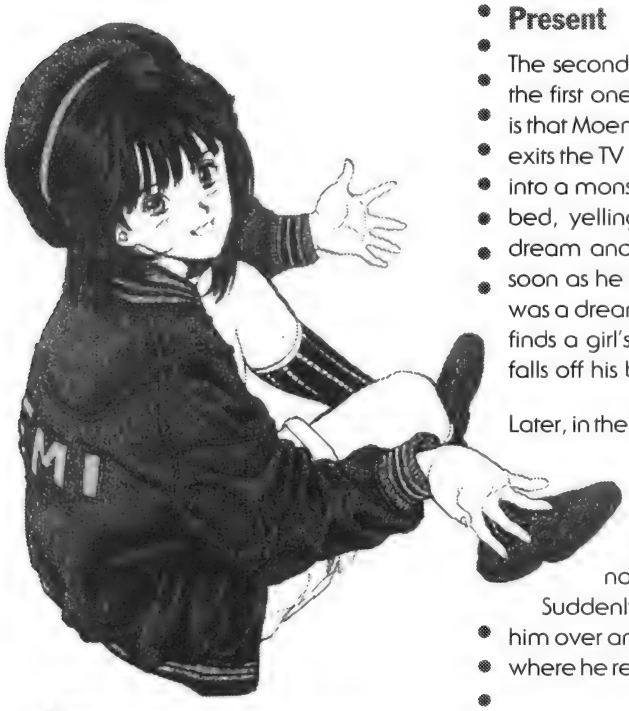
Ai pushes Yota to his room and, while sitting on the bed, he pushes the VCR's remote control. He quickly sees that the remote works on Ai's body the same way it should on a tape. Ai stops him before he can push the Stop button. She yells at him that her lifespan is only one month and that playing with the remote will shorten her life on earth. She then uses some masking tape to stick the remote on the VCR and tells Yota to never touch the VCR again.

Flashback: Takashi arrives at the site where Moemi and Yota are sitting. He throws a can of softdrink to them telling how sorry he is that it took that long to get back. He then asks Yota if the girl he likes could be Moemi. Yota interrupts Takashi and asks

him not to make that kind of joke (even if it's not a joke). Takashi then understands that Yota wasn't able to tell her. Moemi hates that. She asks Yota and Takashi to stop joking around. She tells Yota to fulfill his part of the bargain and tell her who he really likes because she told him that she likes Takashi. Everyone freezes. — End flashback.

Ai throws Yota down the stairs again while asking him to take a bath with her. Not knowing what to do, Yota tells her that he never saw an article in his magazines about taking a bath with a girl. Ai begins to strip in order to put a swimsuit. Suddenly, the phone rings. Yota answers it. It's Takashi. He wants to talk about what happened at the park earlier. Ai asks Yota to hurry up. Takachi asks him if it is Moemi (BTW, Takashi really wants Yota to be with Moemi). Yota answers that it's only a video and that there is no one with him. He hangs up and, as he turns back to talk to Ai, he sees that she is now topless. This is too much for Yota and he faints.

Flashback: Moemi just said she loves Takashi. Takashi plainly replies that Moemi isn't her type of girl. Moemi not knowing what to reply only says that she will have to search for someone else. She leaves calmly but with tears in her eyes. — End flashback.



Yota and Ai are in the bath together (wearing swimsuits of course) and Yota asks why he helped Moemi instead of telling her he loved her. Ai replies that since Moemi didn't say that she doesn't like him, there is still time to win Moemi back. Ai's purpose in life is now set. She will help Yota to be a man whom Moemi will like. Afterward, Ai tries to wash Yota's back but that looks more like a wrestling match than anything else. Later, Yota falls on his bed, physically and emotionally tired. He doesn't even have the strength to remove his clothes. Then without warning, Ai climbs on the bed and falls asleep on the other side. Yota protests that she was supposed to sleep on the couch but she already is asleep. Then he turns the other way and remembers Moemi's words.

Meanwhile, Moemi, in her room, looks at the floor with only one thing in her mind: Takashi's reply "Sorry, but you are not my type". She cries.

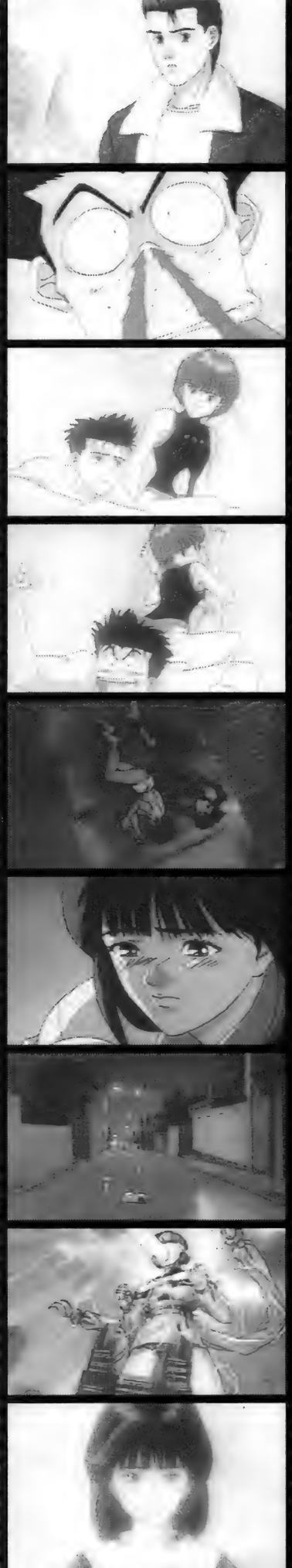
In his bed, Yota begin to cry. Ai puts a hand on Yota's shoulder and tells him to cheer up and never give up. Unlike before, Yota feels bad about the fact that such a caring girl like Ai only has a month to live.

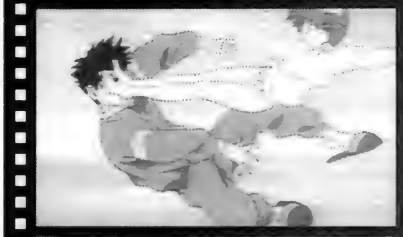
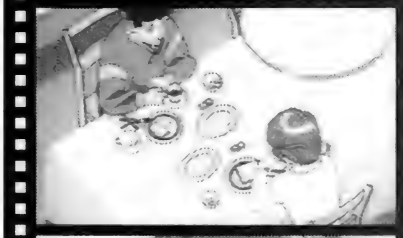
OVA 2:

Present

The second OVA begins the same way the first one began. The only difference is that Moemi has replaced Ai. As Moemi exits the TV screen, she begins to change into a monster and Yota wakes up in his bed, yelling. Of course, all that was a dream and he is in his room alone. As soon as he comforts himself that all that was a dream, he opens up his hand and finds a girl's panty. He starts yelling and falls off his bed.

Later, in the dining room, Yota is amazed to see the table full of food. The only explanation is that it wasn't a dream and that there is really a Video Girl named Ai Amano in his house. Suddenly, out of nowhere, Ai throws him over and he falls on the kitchen floor where he receives some kitchen-ustensils



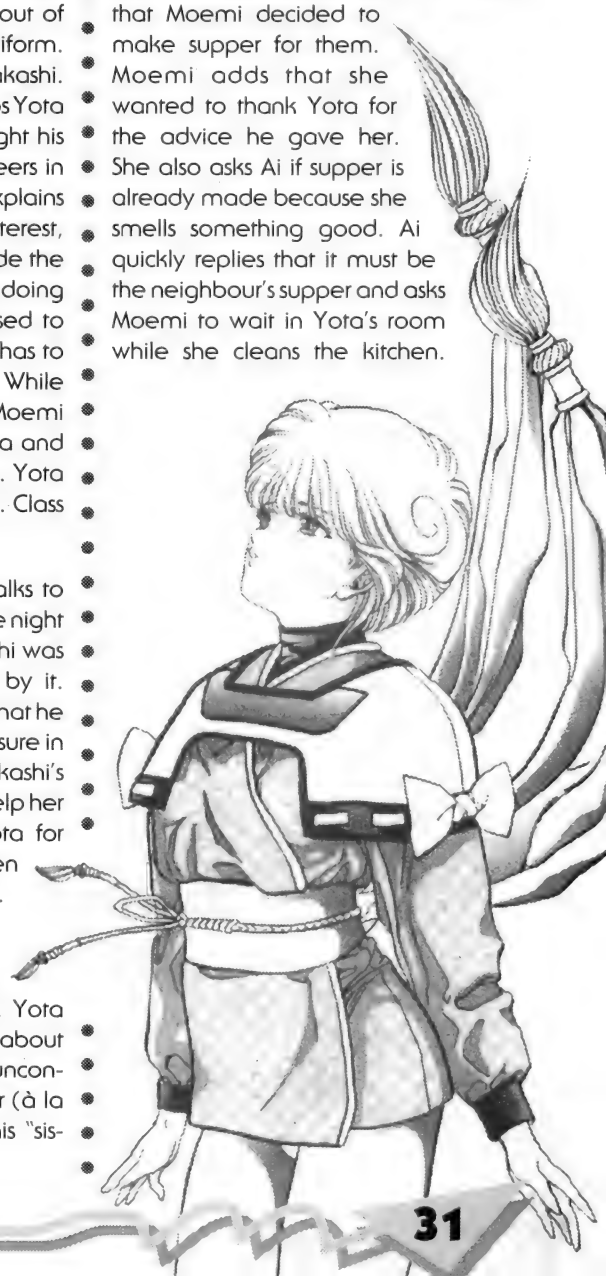
on the head. Ai tells him that it's because he played her on a broken VCR that her breasts have shrunk and that was the part of her body she liked best. Afterwards, she throws him over the table and throws frying pans, along with a micro-wave oven, at Yota. After some wrestling twists & pins on Yota, she gets up and says she feels better now.

It's time to go to school. Yota still thinks about what Moemi said the day before and is sad that she was hurt by Takashi's reply. He wonders if Takashi will change his mind today. He arrives at class where Takashi greets him cheerfully. Yota is confused about Takashi's attitude. Takashi adds that Moemi made a bad joke the day before. Yota knows it's not a joke but Takashi says that he will help Yota to get her. As he says that, Ai appears out of nowhere, wearing a schoolboy uniform. She asks if this is the guy named Takashi. Everyone freezes and Takashi grabs Yota yelling to everyone that he brought his girlfriend Ai to class. Everyone cheers in surprise. Yota, outspoken, simply explains that Ai is his sister. Everyone loses interest, ignoring Yota. Yota takes Ai outside the classroom and asks her what she is doing here. She replies that she promised to always be with him and that she has to get Yota and Moemi together. While talking, they are interrupted by Moemi who comes face to face with Yota and tells him that class is about to start. Yota is surprised to see Moemi cheerful. Class starts and the day goes on.

At the end of the day, Moemi talks to Yota about how much she cried the night before. She doesn't know if Takashi was joking or not, but she was hurt by it. However she thanks Yota about what he said to her and since nothing is for-sure in love, she will do her best to win Takashi's heart. Moemi asks Yota if he will help her and he says yes. She thanks Yota for trusting and helping her and even adds that he is a really good guy.

At that exact moment, Ai closes in behind Moemi and grabs Moemi's breasts saying how big they are. Yota and Moemi are really surprised about Ai's boldness and Yota knocks Ai unconscious with an imaginary hammer (à la City Hunter). He apologizes for his "sister". Moemi says it's nothing and that she has to go. Ai wakes up and Yota asks her why she did that. She replies: "because Moemi said 'you really are a good guy'". She adds that there is still hope between the two of them.

Afterward, Ai goes home and Yota goes shopping. While doing window-shopping, Yota finds a nice-looking dress but people around him seem to think that a boy looking at a dress isn't normal. Moemi sees him and joins him. At home, Ai is cooking a great supper for Yota and is amazed at how good it tastes compared to what she cooked the day before. Then, as she is setting the table, she hears the front door and runs to greet Yota. She stops in mid-sentence as she sees that Yota is with Moemi. Yota tells Ai that Moemi decided to make supper for them. Moemi adds that she wanted to thank Yota for the advice he gave her. She also asks Ai if supper is already made because she smells something good. Ai quickly replies that it must be the neighbour's supper and asks Moemi to wait in Yota's room while she cleans the kitchen.



Moemi asks to help but Ai doesn't want her to see that she already prepared supper. Yota asks himself why Ai is in such a hurry to clean up. Then he remembers that he has a picture of Moemi in his room and he doesn't want Moemi to see it. He runs upstairs and is pleased to see that Moemi waited outside his room. He asks her to wait a little and enters the room to hide the picture. Meanwhile Ai hides — in a cupboard — all the food she cooked.

Back in the room, Yota greets Moemi while thinking that it's the first time she is in his room. He asks her to sit on the bed. As Moemi does so, he can only think that he would love to be that bed but his attention is quickly drawn to a little thing on his bed : Ai's underwear. Yota jumps to grab it before Moemi sees it but slips on a magazine on the floor and falls on the bed with Moemi. They both freeze while looking in each other's eyes when suddenly Ai appears and ask Yota what he is doing with panties in his hand. Yota asks Ai what she is doing here. She replies that the kitchen is clean and that Moemi can begin to cook supper.

In the kitchen, Moemi is preparing supper while Yota seems in another world. He only has eyes for Moemi and Ai gives him a weird look. Just before going to the dining room, Yota sees that there is masking tape blocking one of the cupboards but doesn't say a word about it because it is time to eat Moemi's supper. Yota is the first to try it and the feedback is amazing. He stands up and yells that it is the best food he ever ate. Ai is a little jealous, but decides not to say anything. After supper, she asks Moemi to let her prepare the coffee but Moemi insists on doing it. Afterwards, Yota asks Ai to walk Moemi home because he ate too much and can't walk her home. Ai accepts and Yota stays home.

While walking, Moemi asks Ai about the weird costume she is wearing. She replies that it's a costume for a comic convention. Ai asks Moemi where she met Yota today. Moemi tells Ai that she found Yota standing in front of a store with a red face. She decided to help him do his shopping. Ai comments about how stupid Yota is because he can't even do his shopping. Moemi replies that Yota is really a gentle, caring guy and that he gives her good advice. Ai asks if she prepared supper because she wanted to ask some advices but Moemi says that today's supper was a present for Yota because he helped her a lot. Moemi stops walking and adds that she wishes she fell in love with him instead of Takashi.

On her way back, Ai becomes angry because Yota only thinks about Moemi [she's becoming jealous] and storms in Yota's house wanting to kick someone. She looks for Yota and sees him in the kitchen, eating Ai's supper [the one she hid in the cupboard earlier]. Ai asks Yota how he found out about it and he replies that even a dog could hide it better than her. Ai is surprised. Yota tells her that the supper was really good and shows her a bag. The bag contains a present he bought earlier at the shopping mall. She opens it and the gift is in fact the nice dress Yota was looking at in the shop some hours ago. Ai grabs him by the neck and thanks him. She even adds that if he keeps being so nice to her, she will fall in love with him. Yota says that the one he loves is Moemi. Ai tells him not to worry because videogirls can't fall in love with someone but falling tears on her cheek betrays her true feelings.

VIDEO GIRL AI THE MOVIE

by François Vézina

Released by Toho in 1991, this movie is more a curiosity than anything else. Being filmed in live action, the movie involves the same characters as in the OVAs but with a slightly different story. Most of the plot is the same but the relationship between the characters is a little different. In the Manga and in the OVA you don't feel that Yota is such a wimp; in the movie, the actor who plays Yota really makes a fool of himself. Even more, I don't see why Moemi would want to go out with him. Since Video Girl is a story based around Yota, we see the movie through Yota's eyes. That means we don't see Moemi nor Takashi if they aren't with Yota. However, we do see some scenes with Ai alone (ie: in the Gokuraku and with Takashi). Even though the story is compressed to fit in two hours, we do see some scenes that weren't on the OVAs.

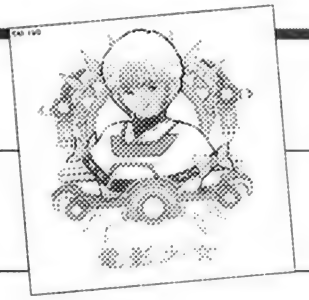
Story:

The movie begins with a flashback of Yota's youth. He is playing in a park with his friend Takashi and he sees a little girl and they talk. The girl makes a promise and leaves. Yota tells Takashi that he will be with this girl as he grows up. This girl, of course, is Moemi. Afterwards, the movie shows Yota's room where he wakes up. After he finishes dressing up, someone rings at the door and Yota leaves his room to answer the door. While going to the door, he trips over his VCR cables and the VCR falls to the floor. He puts it back and answers the door. A guy asks if this is the Motenai's house and Yota replies that it's the Moteuchi's house [same joke as always]. The guy gives him a postcard from his dad but Yota doesn't have the time to read it because he is late for an appointment with Moemi.

At a fastfood restaurant, he talks with Moemi [who is really cute by the way] but is too nerdy to come up with his own dialogue. Instead, he looks at a pocket computer with pre-arranged sentences on it. After making a goof out of himself, Yota and Moemi go to a public pool. Yota tries to swim but he even looks weirder in a pool than on solid ground. While drying himself, Takashi appears bringing some magazines to Yota. All three go to the park where Moemi tells them she likes Takashi. Same result as in the OVAs: Takashi doesn't like her. From that point on most of the plot is identical to the OVAs except that everything happens faster. He comes home, finds Gokuraku, brings Ai at home, plays the tape, she exits the screen, etc...

Afterwards, one of the big differences are that we don't see Moemi for nearly one hour. Also, at about the same time she come back into Yota's life, Ai disappears for the first time (in the Manga, Ai disappears twice instead of once in the OVAs). Yota searches for her but Kora puts him to sleep and he wakes up in his house. Life goes on as if Ai never existed except that one day she comes back reprogrammed by Kora. She is now working as she was supposed to be and seems to be no longer interested in Yota's feeling.

Later, she goes out and meets Takashi. They talk a lot and Kora appears. He is coming to take Ai back to the VideoWorld since her running time is about to finish. Yota comes home and is greeted by Kora who wants to stop him for seeing Ai before she vanishes. The videoshop owner stops Kora, and Yota unfortunately enter his house after Ai vanishes. He sees some flowers on the floor leading to his room. Once there, he sees that his bed is covered with flowers. Ai appears and talks with him for the last time and she vanishes. In the end, Yota takes a sheet of paper and begins to draw his dream girl, who happens to be Ai.



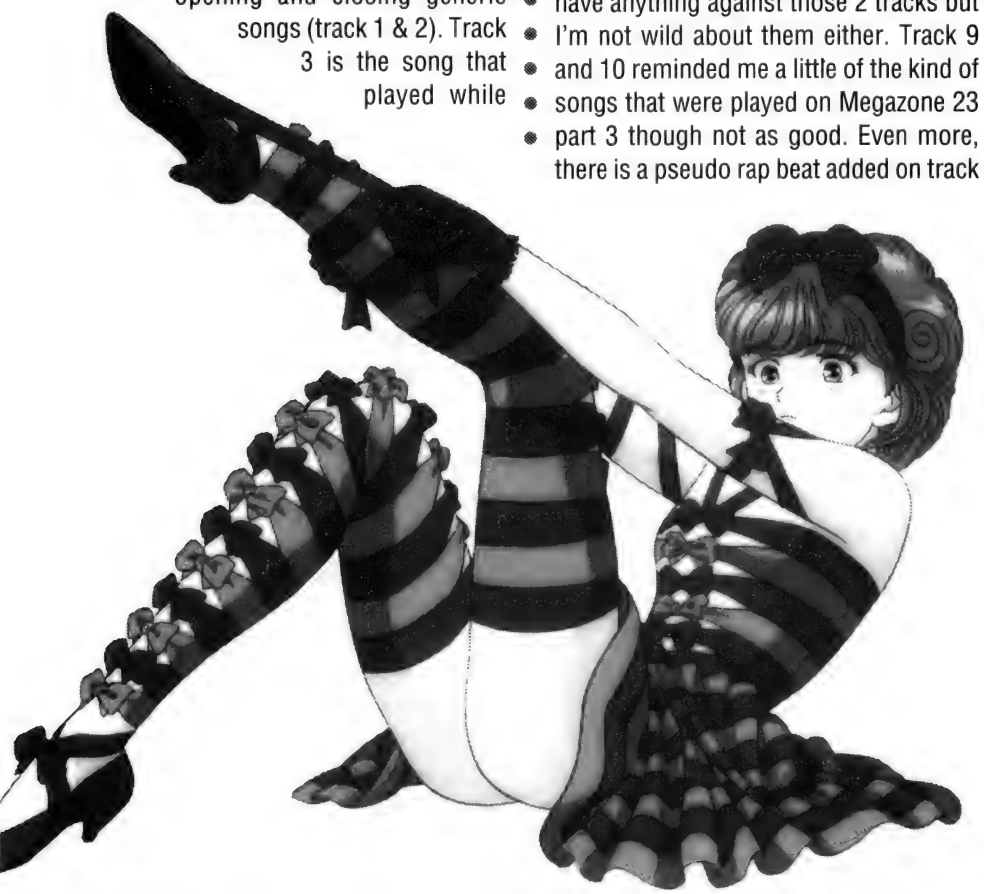
VIDEO GIRL AI BGM 1 & 2

by François Vézina

As with all the other animation products released in Japan, Video Girl AI got his share of products linked to its OVAs. Among those products came two BGM CDs. First of all, I want to say that the 1st CD is better than the second because the second CD is a drama album. For those who can't understand Japanese, you'll miss about half of the disk. That will leave you with only 25 to 30 minutes of music for the same price as any CD.

BGM 1:

The first album is quite good and, as any good anime-based CD, it contains the opening and closing generic songs (track 1 & 2). Track 3 is the song that played while Yota and Moemi went out shopping together. It isn't bad but it could have been better. Track 4 is the album's best. It is the song that is first heard when Yota is in his room with AI at the end of the 1st OVA. I really liked this song as it has a nice progressive sound. As a matter of fact, I got the album because of that song. Track number 5 isn't so bad either. It is the song that is played in the preview at the end of OVA 2. The next six tracks (6-11) are instrumentals songs. I didn't like most of them but you can't win all the time. Track 6, which I especially dislike, is the song Takashi's group plays in the 4th OVA. Track 7 is played on a banjo and an accordion. Track 8 is played on a piano. I don't have anything against those 2 tracks but I'm not wild about them either. Track 9 and 10 reminded me a little of the kind of songs that were played on Megazone 23 part 3 though not as good. Even more, there is a pseudo rap beat added on track 10 which I don't like at all. Track 11 is slow. Same comment as for tracks number 7 & 8. However, the last track of this disk is a vocal song. Track 12 is the song played at the end of OVA 3 and is a great tune to listen to. Personal verdict for BGM 1 : 5 songs I liked (1,2,4,5,12), 5 neutral (3,7,8,9,11) and 2 I didn't like (6,10).



BGM 2:

The second album is quite different from the first since it is a drama album. All odd tracks combine to make a continuous story played by the voice-actors of the OVAs. Some may like it but if you don't understand Japanese, it may be a waste of time and money. The songs are on the even tracks of the disk and there is only 8 of them. Don't forget that half the tracks also means nearly half the time. If you put that in perspective, disk 2 is about 15 minutes drama and 25 minutes music. That mean 33$ for 25 minutes, not as good as for a BGM disk. However, if you're into drama albums, go for it.

The first song on disk 2 (track 2) left me a little indifferent. Not that it isn't good theme but for some reason this song didn't catch my attention. Track 4 is a slow and is one of the few songs that I really liked on this album, but I can't remember where it was played on the OVAs. Track 6 is a pseudo rap song. I don't like that kind of beat. Track 8 is more pseudo rap but instrumental only. Track 10 is a little more like dance music and it reminds me of a tune I already heard somewhere. I can't remember where, but I'm sure I heard it before. Track 12 is the best of all, heard in the last OVA when Yota is climbing the glass stairways in the video dimension. It's the same kind of music as track track 4 of disk 1. Track 14 is another instrumental song and is the 'bells only' version of the opening generic song. Finally, track 16 is the vocal version of the instrumental slow we can hear almost everywhere in the OVAs — it isn't bad. Personal verdict for BGM 2 : 3 songs I liked (4,12,16), 3 neutral (2,10,14) and 2 I didn't like (6,8).

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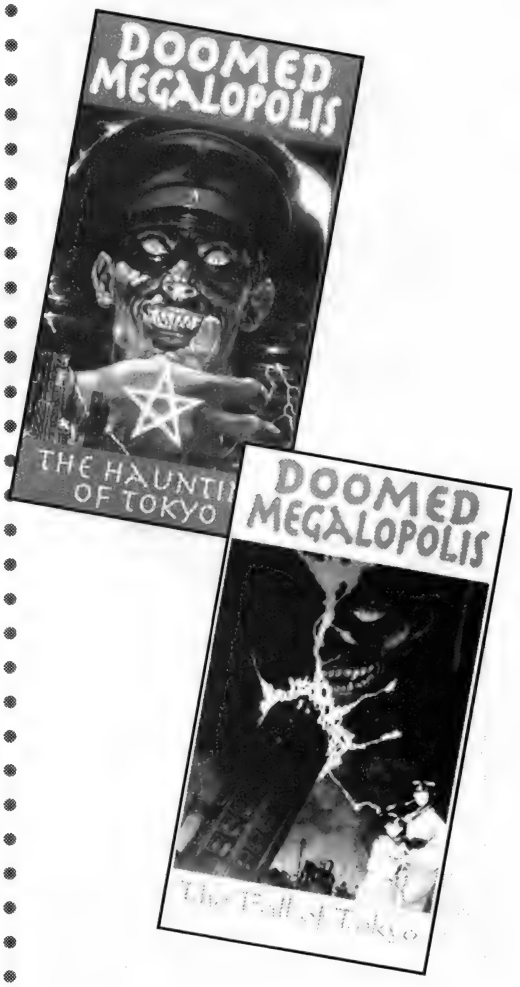
MORE ANIME TO WATCH

SD DOUBLE FEATURE: SCRAMBLE WARS AND 10 LITTLE GALL FORCE

This tape features two different OVAs, both Super Deformed parodies. 10 LITTLE GALL FORCE is an incredibly cute and funny parody of the much liked GALL FORCE OVA series. The characters are wonderfully rendered, with Catty and Eluza being the best. It tells the story of the "making" of the first two OVAs and shows the superdeformed Artmic crew and the GALL FORCE cast in action as they "shoot" the OVAs. The quantity of sight gags is truly humongous and, from what we could see, there are a lot of puns as well. The only problem is that someone who has not seen the "serious" OVAs may have some little problems relating to the jokes. The SD anime is followed by a short clip of the voice actresses singing one of the GALL FORCE theme songs.

SCRAMBLE WARS is as funny as 10LGF albeit less "cute". It features characters and mecha from just about all the Artmic animations (GENESIS CLIMBER MOSPEADA, GAIARTH, GALL FORCE, etc.) but is more or less centered on the BUBBLEGUM CRISIS characters (with a psychotic Celia and a hell-bent for leather Nene) and the GALL FORCE: ETERNAL STORY crew. The story is quite simple: all those Artmic characters compete against each other in a rally taking place in the setting of GENESIS SURVIVOR GAIARTH. And it's total mayhem! Funny, less interesting than TEN LITTLE GALL FORCE but still very good. We highly recommend this SD DOUBLE FEATURE. AnimEigo, Cat.# AT093-004, subtitled, 67 min., $34.95 ****



DOOMED MEGALOPOLIS I-II

This is, without a doubt, one of the best OVA series we have seen in years. The story takes place in Tokyo, at the beginning of the century. The peace of the city is disturbed by a very powerful, evil sorcerer who wants to awake the slumbering guardian of the city. Since it would provoke a catastrophe, a group of (probably) Shinto priests try to stop him. But when Sato, the sorcerer, discovers that he can't wake the guardian alone, he decides to enlist the (unwilling) help of a young girl. The priests decide to protect her but don't realize that the real intention of Sato is to conceive a child with her. This anime is adapted from a live-action movie series. It retains the

quality of the original horror movie with some improvements. The animation itself is technically and esthetically fantastic and we could not find anything wrong with it. The character designs, if unusual (they remind us of WINGS OF HONNEAMISE with some touches of NADIA), are perfect and the music is extraordinary. Even the dubbing is satisfactory. If you have to buy an OVA series, try this one. You will not be disappointed: it is certainly not the typical horror-style anime. Streamline Pictures, Cat. #90603/90653, dubbed, 50 min. ea., $24.95 ea. *****

GENESIS SURVIVOR GAIARTH II

Although Part II is not better in quality than part I, it at least has something more: it gives us an idea of where this story is going! In this one, we learn who Zaxxon is. From what could be understood, he was originally human. His former partner, Barbarossa, was also human and still is (at least partly) while Zaxxon seems to have become a full cyborg (like Briareos in APPLESEED). Zaxxon was the protector of a princess of some kind and, since her coming is quite feared by the local city council, we expect a catastrophe by the end of the third episode (or at least a full-throttle battle!). Part II ends with the long awaited confrontation between the duo Zaxxon/Ital and Barbarossa. All in all, GAIARTH II is better (storywise) than Part I and is worth buying, though Part I is essential in understanding the story. It is a very entertaining series. Nice post-cataclysmic universe. AnimEigo, Cat. # AT093-003, subbed, 46 min., $34.95 ***

HARMAGEDDON

Although this is interesting because of the presence of Katsuhiro Otomo's (AKIRA) character designs, it is another OVA where we wonder why they chose to subtitle it. It is not because it is bad, but there are so many other titles that would have been better to do (like NAUSICAA, FIVE STAR STORIES, just to name a few — probably that HARMAGEDDON's rights were easier to obtain). It remind us a lot of AKIRA: same kind of story (mutant ESPers), same color tones, the same cold and unyielding atmosphere. The main character is even a clone of Tetsuo! The animation is not bad at all, the music fits the mood and the design of the "cyborg" might be considered interesting. It just could not retain my attention because it does not single itself out of the ever-growing crowd of translated animation that comes out each month. Another disadvantage is its length: more then two hours! Watching two hours of an average animation could be a torture compared to two hours of an interesting one (like WINGS OF HONNEAMISE). If North American video companies want the general public to buy animation they will have to release really good stuff to seduce them. The average stuff just won't do. (Hey! Come on! HARMAGEDDON is not that bad. Just a little long that's all — CJP). USMC, Cat. # USM 1038, subbed, 132 min. $39.95 **

(-)	Waste of money
*	Poor
**	Fair
***	Good
****	Excellent
*****	Outstanding!

THE WEATHERING CONTINENT

by Martin Ouellette & C. J. Pelletier

The Japanese animation industry sometimes creates extraordinary little gems, but curiously, fails to see it as such and do not follow up on it. That was the case with Weathering Continent. The third of a trio of one-hour movies that made up a theatrical special which showcased the newest animations from Kadokawa (the other two being Legend of Arslan Part II and Silent Mobius II), Weathering Continent followed the "heroic fantasy" trend that was set in motion by OVAs such as Record of Lodoss War and Arslan, albeit in a rather different format. While Lodoss and Arslan are more or less action-oriented, the creators of Weathering Continent chose to focus on the story and characters. As with many of Kadokawa's animations, Nobuteru Yuki was hired as character designer, as he specializes in ethereally-beautiful characters, something that was necessary for the fantasy atmosphere of the movie (he had already done Deedlit and Pirotess for Record of Lodoss War, as well as the character adaptation for Kadokawa's animated version of Mamoru Nagano's Five Star Stories).

The story of Weathering Continent recounts the adentures of three voyagers, Rakushi the Princess, Boisu the Warrior and Tieh the Magician from the mountains, on a slowly disintegrating continent (which we strongly suspect is Atlantis) populated by bands of cutthroats and vagrants looking for the most precious commodity of all on a continent victim of desertification: water. The three characters' journey is perilous but not more than it usually is, until they stumble on the ruins of a gigantic subterranean city consecrated to the dead! Named Azec Sistura, this city was built by people that believed that the afterlife was more important than the life they were living. So all their riches were used to build a magnificent city, where their souls, now magically contained in porcelain masks, could rest forever in great luxury. People with good intentions could wander in the city, with the condition that they show proper respect to the dead. Rakushi, Boisu and Tieh do not have problems with that, but the band of robbers who are following them do not show the same respect, ,angering the souls and putting our voyagers in great danger. Tieh tries to appease the souls, but to no avail. The masks attack and kill all the robbers and are about to do the same to Boisu and Rakushi when they are saved by the soul of a young girl who had died while under their care in ruins a good distance away from Azec Sistura. She wanted to thank them by saving them. Tieh's heightened senses lead them to water and leaving these lands, they find they have returned to the city where they had found the girl.

The three then continue their voyage, as we see them walking in the sand dunes...

This is, of course, an extremely short synopsis of the story. We strongly suggest that the viewer read a good synopsis before watching Weathering, as some of the enjoyment is taken away by incomprehension. But even then, the animation is beautiful and the music so haunting (especially the one we hear in a short video clip that follows) that it can be enjoyed without fully understanding the story. All in all, Weathering Continent is the proof that something short and done with passion and artistry can be as perfect as a big production like Akira. Now, if Kadokawa could only be persuaded to do a sequel...

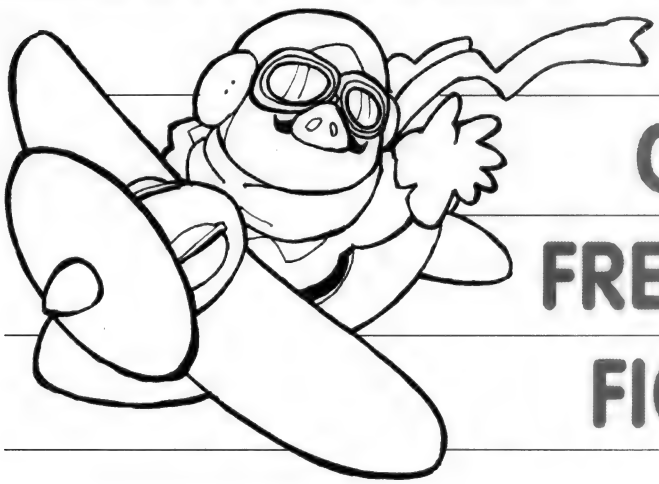
V-GUNDAM CONTINUED

by Martin Ouellette

There had been rumors of this series' cancellation. Guess what? The rumors were totally wrong! The series has been going on for two seasons and does not show any sign of slowing down, quite the contrary! Usso Evin (the Gundam pilot) has been voted most popular male character in Newtype, while V-Gundam was voted favorite series in a poll in the same magazine. And the quantity of model kits being put into production by Bandai (who usually do not back losers) attests to the series popularity. Why is V-Gundam so popular? The reason could be its manga-like atmosphere and action, a target that Yoshiyuki Tomino, the director of the series, had set for it at the very beginning. Since he had done Gundam F91 just before, there were fears in the Gundam fandom that V-Gundam would be just as bad, but thankfully, our fears proved to be wrong. The announcement that the audience targeted was the early teens (12 to 15 years old) also provoked some cold sweat, but the story line is quite mature, something that helped old Gundam fans keeping their calm and watch the series without feeling ashamed if they like it. (The same thing occurs with Sailor Moon, by the way. If people like it they say so. If not they say so. Nobody is ashamed of liking it.) Here is a short synopsis of what is going on from episode 16 to episode 25. This is not an absolutley perfect interpretation, so there could be some errors. If so, please forgive us...

The Riga Militia has now blasted off to space via the Gibraltar mass driver and find out that the Federals have been pushed back on all fronts. Yep! They are the only worthwhile opposition left! They cannot expect any help whatsoever from the Federals. Another bunch of kids have joined the gang and Thomas, the blond computer genius, falls for one of the new girls, a cute, blue-haired little lady who does not intend to play around with him, giving us some of the comedy interludes needed to soften lighten the story.

Furious battle after furious battle, Usso and the other Riga Militia pilots, including Mabetto and the three surviving members of the Gun-EZ team, are fine-tuning their fighting skills. Usso's V-Gundam is now the V-Dash, with a booster/ beam cannon back pack, while Mabetto now uses a federalized Zoloat MS captured from the Zansugaaru. The mass production version of the V-Gundam, the Hexa-Gundam, is now also in service. At one point, some of the gang (Shakti, Suzy, Kururuman and Flanders the dog) are sucked out into space when the RM flagship gets hit and are captured and taken to Side 2 by the Zansugaaru. This is when Chronixle discovers that Shakti is a relative. Usso and the other pilots attempt to rescue the kids but must turn back when the Zansugaaru forces prove to be too much for them. Usso's military experience increases with time, as he battles more and more powerful foes (including a Mobile Armor). One of the most gripping battles happens when Peggy Lee (one of the Gun-EZ girls. A real babe!) gets royally clobbered by Chronixle and his retinue of enthusiastic mecha jocks, getting wounded in the process. This does not keep her from going on a mission in a seriously damaged MS. Guess what will follow in episode 26? V-Gundam is looking better and better. See you in the next PA for a run down of episodes 26 to 32. Happy New Year!



VOICE OF THE FREEDOM FIGHTER

Claude:

What's with John Moscato? I gather from his "reviews" of ROBOTECH in #18 that he was probably a fan of the original anime before they were combined into the US series. Given this bias, he should have never been allowed to review them. (...) But a kinder side-bar to his review of NADIA: yes, Grandis' sort-of-mech is a little anacronistic — but in the other direction. Its design looks to me to have been inspired by Leonardo da Vinci's "tank" design, only built with industrial-age materials and a few things old Leo never dreamed of. As for what's coming up later in the series — Gargoyle's airships — it is interesting to note that while no one had invented them yet (the same as Jean's airplane), there were thousands of sightings across the world of airship-like objects during 1890s. In fact, the ones shown in NADIA match the visual descriptions given by eye-witnesses back then (the series' creators either really did their homework or are big UFO fans). (...)

Now that Palladium Books is coming out with MACROSS II RPG, how about someone writing up the mechs and the Mu from ORGUSS for Palladium's RIFTS RPG? I know you guys prefer MEKTON and MECHA!, but there are still a lot of diehard ROBOTECH gamers out there, many of whom play characters of ROBOTECH origin in RIFTS. RIFTS, for those of you not familiar with it, is 100% compatible with the ROBOTECH and MACROSS II RPGs, and is set on an Earth in the late 24th Century that has been an interdimensional nexus for 300 years. It has robot vehicles and power armors (several of which appear to be anime-inspired), fantasy races, demons, cyborgs, magic and psionics, not to mention the toughest vampires I've ever run into in a game. Jabby would fit in as a variation of the Dragon R.C.C.) that's right, a Player-Character Class), Mome and the Mu can be constructed using RIFTS Robot and Borg rules, while the Emaan would fit in as a race of D-Bee humans. I'd do the conversions myself, but I only have old SLP copies of the series to study, no other source material, and my knowledge of Japanese is limited to the words from the Styx song "Mr. Roboto".

RE: The editorial in PA #17 — (...) Ethnic nationalism of the type you describe is only a problem with Quebec; none of the other states and provinces in North America have a population that is narrow in origin as Quebec, or that think of the lower cultural division first. (...) I've heard that it is illegal to post a (...) sign written in English in Quebec; if this is true, Quebec should be the last place talking about ethnic rights.

On Japan: Who have you been talking to? Japanese society has a much darker side to it that you present. Many students spend as many hours in "cram schools" as they do in regular classes, in an often vain attempt to avoid becoming "university ronin" like Godai in MAISON IKKOKU. (...) And if you think that there are ethnic problems with how other Canadians and US citizens react to Quebecers and Native Americans, think about Japan's tens of thousands of ethnic Koreans (...). Then there are the Ainu, the Eta underclass, and the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atom-bomb survivors & their descendants. There is evidence that Japan is on the verge of undergoing a period similar to the American 1960s, but the persons putting forward this theory are also afraid that the US civil rights movement will be relatively peaceful compared to what's coming in Japan.

(...) I really like PA, but I sometimes feel it is too influenced by its staff's political views for its own good. Try to keep the editorials anime-related, ok?

A PA fan until Minmei gets sued for lip-synching Reba West,

Stan Bundy
404 Gordon Street
Corbin, KY 40701, USA

P.S. To any readers interested: I'm wanting to set up a ROBOTECH RPG player/GM network for exchanging ideas, mecha designs, art, etc. with the possibility of producing a supplement for submission to Palladium. Contact me if you want to hear more.

You're right about John, but it's not because he's a fan of the original series; he is just a hard critic. — I don't like RIFTS. Too much mega-damage. But MACROSS II RPG seems cool (like ROBOTECH). We will probably cover Palladium's RPG in MECHA PRESS. Maybe you could contribute? — In a North American context, "ethnic" does also mean "regional". Just think of the great differences between people from West and East coasts. People from British Columbia feel as distinct as Quebecers. Find ethnic-like nationalism only in Quebec? What of the growing aspirations and frustrations of Blacks and Latinos in the US? We don't have outbursts of violence like the incident in LA. There's a lot disparity between regions and classes in USA. It's just that people refuse to see it. The sign law in Quebec went too far, I agree. All we want is protect our language and culture but must not infringe anglophone's rights. — About Japan: I was only reflecting upon some aspects. It was an editorial (to make people think that's why it's political) not a ten-page dissertation, so I didn't cover all aspects. You are right: Japanese are very racist, and Japan is experiencing severe social problems. — Politics always stayed in the editorial pages and NEVER influenced the contents of the magazine!

PA:

I recently picked up a copy of PA #21. I must comment on your article "Japan Rocks" by James Taylor. The idea was good. But James had better do some serious catchup work. For starters, Kinuko Ohmori has already put 4 albums out since "Sweet Dreams" with her band SILK. Then there is Princess-Princess. Mr. Taylor compared them with Van Halen. Not!! If Mr. Taylor want to hear a real kickass band, he should listen to SHOW-YA (sort of a cross between AC/DC and METALICA — and they are an all female band — makes it even better). They have 8 original albums, 2 live albums, and 5 best albums out to date. SHOW-YA also does several songs in full English including the Beatles "Blackbird" (much improved I believe). Further, I would suggest PINK SAPPHIRE, sort of like HEART but all girls. Check 'em out!!!

Matt Matherly
Bremerton, WA

P.S. SHOW-YA's album covers fool nobody. They look like hardcore rockers. "Glamour", "The hard Way", and "Backfire" are a few good examples. Also, as if you didn't know already, you have Michi Tomizama and Kinuko Ohmori's pictures reversed on page 10.

Dear Claude,

About Japanese pop: I love it! I have PRINCESS PRINCESS album CJD-1594 and there is a lot of influence here. Mostly a MOTOWN flavor in "Moon-

light song", but when you get to RAIN (when we fell in love) these ladies really take off. There is a mean (and I do mean "mean") acoustic guitar in the background of this song.

A few years ago (...), I had a friend of a young lady from Gunma who liked Billy Joel. I would send her his tapes, and she'd send me these dreamy tapes of songbirds like Hiroko Yakushimal and Yusa Mimori. Seiko still has quite a following, so don't count her out. The real tragic story was Pink Lady. They broke into disco with "Kiss in the Dark" for a US label, and had a summer series on NBC that floundered...

By the way, LET'S GET CRAZY is PRINCESS PRINCESS LIVE AT BUDOKAN. Recently, a friend from Scotsburn told me that a radio show called BRAVE NEW WAVES played selections from a camp band called SHONEN KNIFE. These three sound like a cross between THE RAMONES and THE B-52'S but for three girls that can't play their instruments, they have me fooled. I have one you would like: BE WITH by Miki Imai (FOR LIFE 28C-150). There is one track called "I'm a hurricane" where she sounds like Gloria Estefan.

Finally, I came across a name in your magazine that I'd like to get in touch with since he's only 12 miles from where I live. Looking into PA #20 in the VOICE OF FREEDOM FIGHTERS, you'll find him: Mr. Joshua Wanisko of Belvedere, NJ. Kindly run my address for his convenience since I live in a nearby town...

Sincerely,

Michael J. Kesely
117 Bullman St.
Phillipsburg, NJ, 08865

Dear PA:

I would like to take this opportunity to inform my fellow Anime fans that Viz Comics, under their new Viz Video branch, is planning on releasing Rumiko Takahashi's MERMAID SCAR (the sequel of MERMAID'S FOREST) and RANMA 1/2. My only problem with this is that these releases will be dubbed, and Viz has stated that there are no current plans to subtitle them.

I urge all fans of subtitled Anime to write them so that they'll rectify this situation. While I understand that the general public prefers dubbing, they mustn't overlook the fact that the majority of Anime videos are purchased by fans, and there are a large number of fans who will only buy subtitled tapes. There is, of course, the fact that many of Viz's manga translations are selling well, but I've noticed that fans tend to be a little more forgiving about them. After all, you can't subtitle a comic book.

What I suggest (and hope the rest of you do as well) is that Viz put out both dubbed AND subtitled versions of these tapes. Let's make sure we have a choice other than Licenced but Dubbed or Bootlegged but Subbed!

E. Bernhard Warg
State College, PA

To the Protoculture dealers,

First, let me start by praising you. Your magazine is fantastic. Each article is well researched and presented. The internal art is well drawn or well selected and the cover... Excellent. You really deserve more credit than you're given. Don't change a thing.

Now, the reason for my writing. As you may have realized, I live in Australia (big hello to all members of Anime Australia and Ground Zero!), and anime CD's are few and far between. I was delighted to see PA #21 was devoted to soundtrack, as the best way for us to get a good CD is to read a review then send away to a horribly expensive mail order company. The thing is, if the review is wrong and the CD is bad, then we are stuck with a REALLY expensive shiny frisbee!

Anywau, after reading through issue 21 (and ordering NAUSICAA CD), I was amazed to find that your "good anime CD guide" missed in my opinion the greatest anime soundtrack album. Namely the PROJECT A-KO soundtrack, also known as PROJECT A-KO ORIGINAL SONGBOOK. This instant sell-out in Japan is full of bright, catchy melodies, cute voices with every track full of humour, perfectly reflecting the wacky atmosphere of the movie. Who says voice actors can't sing? Probably the best part of all is that three tracks are in English! Written and performed in Hollywood, it includes composers of the likes of Joey Carbone (Star Search) and Richie Zito (Flashdance). You'll find that the songs just stay in your mind. And, if you have stereo sound, when B-ko fires a missile at A-ko... Incredible.

This CD is a must have for any anime collection. I also have the AKIRA soundtrack and the BGC music, but none were played as much as the A-KO CD. It was originally released by Polystar No. H34R-20004. BUY IT!

Truly addicted,

Nicholas Seet
Bardon, Qld., Australia

Dear PA,

I have been a fan of ROBOTECH since I saw it on TV years ago. However, I missed most of the shows because I had to go to school (didn't get home until the show ended). When it went off the air, I lost track of it for a while, but last year I started collecting comics and found some ROBOTECH comics. That's when my interest flared up again. I also found some ROBOTECH videos. I have all of the Macross Saga and most of the New Generation, but I can't find volume 6 & 8 anywhere. I was wondering if you could help me find them. I have also been reading the books. I have read all the Sentinels, the End of the Circle and the First Generation 1-4. I expect to have read all the books by the time the new one comes out. I have also made ROBOTECH models (they're cool). I'm eagerly waiting for the new line of toys to come out. I'd like to hear from any other ROBOTECH fans.

Thanks for your time,

Steven Vuong
Bryant College
Student P.O. Box 2959
1150 Douglas Pike
Smithfield, RI 02917-1291

Dear Mr. Vezina,

I cannot help but be impressed and somewhat heartened when the Editor of a publication can take the time to correspond with his customers as many times as you have done. (...) You guys have really outdone yourselves with your new-and-improved, economy-size format. I have nothing but admiration for what I have seen in my first subscription issue (#23). I can get some idea of why it may take you guys a little longer than you would prefer to get these issues out. Perfection isn't easy, and while PA #23 isn't perfect, I can see that you are striving. Anime is pouring into North America, and the PA staff is keeping the Otaku informed.

It all began for me with anime, but I have slowly but surely gotten a healthy interest in manga, so I really enjoyed the article by Toren Smith and the preceeding pages dedicated to informing us of what is available in English version manga. I was glad to see that there was so much of it here in the US and Canada. But as you have neglected to inform us of the addresses of video companies which produce anime in North America, you failed to do so again in your Manga World section. I am currently living in a dirt-hole in South Carolina, where Japanese pop culture is a dirty word. Finding items such as Masamune Shirow's APPLESEED or DOMINION, or Johji Manabe's CARAVAN KIDD or OUTLANDERS is an impossibility down here. It is also difficult to get comic book store owners to order these items. If it wouldn't be too much trouble, I would like to know how I could reach Dark Horse Comics and Antarctic Press so I can find out how I can personally order their products.

Keep up the good — no — fantastic work up there. Keep the stuff rolling!

Sincerely,

John Beam
Gaffney, SC

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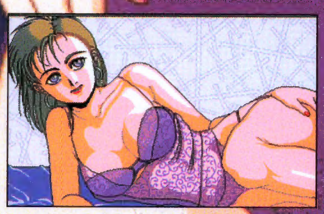

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